

Getting ready for the Diploma

The essential guide for the exams office

Spring 2009



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

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Foreword



This guide is for all exams officers in England who are getting ready to administer the Diploma from September 2009. This is the second edition of the guide, building on the publication produced last year for the first wave of Diploma consortia. We have drawn on the feedback from those consortia to improve the guide for this year.

The introduction of the Diploma heralds a new era in the educational choices available to young people from age 14 upwards. It involves new subject matter, new teaching patterns and – crucially for exams officers – new qualifications and assessment methods. Instead of working as a single centre, schools, colleges and a range of other organisations will work to make full use of the best locally available resources to support learners.

But alongside the opportunities, these changes bring fresh challenges, particularly in terms of administration. The first year of Diploma administration and the introduction of consortium working require changes to exams officers' work, which need careful planning and management. Experience has shown that strong leadership at all levels and common working practices are vital. In this guide, we have used the first-hand experiences of those who have been delivering the Diploma already to highlight the kind of practices that can really help.

This guide, together with Diploma events planned during the first half of 2009, is designed to help exams officers to agree common practice across a consortium.

By using the guide, taking advantage of the events and keeping in touch with your local Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) centre support officer, you will lay the foundations for successful administration.

Mick Walker, Director of Tests and Examinations Support, QCA

Why you should read this guide

This guide is intended, along with QCA's regional Diploma events, to be the most comprehensive collection of advice and guidance available to date for exams officers in Diploma consortia. It is designed to help exams officers get ready for managing assessment administration of the Diploma.



Diplomas represent a substantial change for the education of 14–19-year-olds.

Whereas the delivery of general qualifications largely involved the learners and staff of a single centre, Diploma management can only succeed through well-planned, collaborative and common working practices between centres.

Many Diploma consortia will still be working out what these common practices will look like and how to implement them. In some instances, plans that do exist may not yet be understood by all members of staff. This guide will help by defining the core issues, starting with a review of the Diploma process and its new terminology.

The guide explains what is involved in being part of a consortium and follows this with key advice on Diploma assessment management for the exams office.

Three stages are identified for progress towards becoming ready for managing Diploma assessment administration: preparation, agreement and action.

For each stage, the guide identifies information that exams officers will need to obtain along with tasks to be completed. Each stage also includes a checklist. When you are confident that you can tick every box for one stage, you can be satisfied that you are ready for the next stage.

Beyond the exams office

The central focus of this guide is on the exams office and the tasks that you are likely to face. But the principles of collaborative working will also need to be applied by

14–19 coordinators, consortium planners and lines of learning leaders. Much of this guide will be useful to them too, for example there is a specific section on the role of leadership and how managers can support exams office plans. Hundreds of centres across the country are now delivering the Diploma and have experienced the planning and organisation required to get ready. This guide has been written to take account of this national experience and includes views of what some of the individuals involved have learned.

QCA tools and resources

To help consortia prepare for managing assessment administration, there are a number of tools available from QCA. These include:

- the *Consortium centre planner* – a printed and online tool for exams officers to record important information about the consortium and note the responsibilities of different centres in the consortium
- the *Consortium exam policy generator* – an online tool which helps consortium leaders, local authorities and exams officers agree fundamental policies that affect administration of Diploma assessment.

The tools are referenced throughout this guide.

Through using this guide, the available tools and tapping into the ongoing support available from QCA (see section 10), exams officers and consortium colleagues can work together to ensure the best possible Diploma delivery in their consortium.

Acknowledgements

QCA would like to thank individuals listed here for contributing views and experiences on getting ready for the Diploma. Their testimonies appear throughout this guide.

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These individuals work as a group in the Woking Federation Consortium.

Wendy Arthur**Eve Chapman****Chris Evans****Jake Meechan**

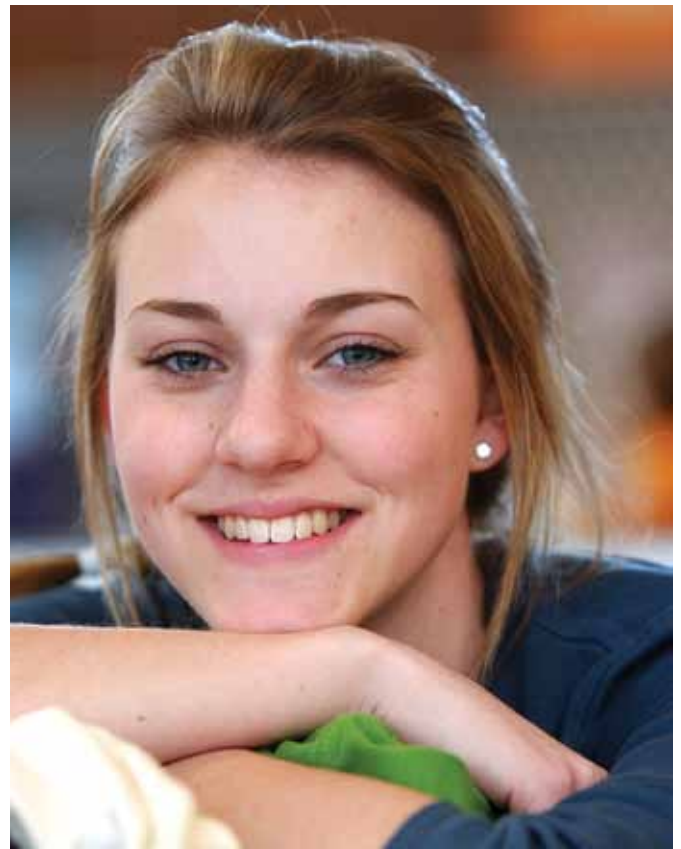
1. The Diploma: What you need to know

The Diploma is the most significant qualification development in a generation. Developed in partnership with businesses and universities, the Diploma mixes theory with practice to provide learners with an education that enables them to work confidently, effectively and independently in life and the workplace.

By 2011 learners will be able to select from Diplomas in 17 lines of learning. These then provide the context for the whole Diploma. **Principal learning**, based on the line of learning, forms the core of what learners study. It focuses on developing knowledge and skills specific to that line of learning.

In addition to this, students must study other elements to help them develop wider skills. These are:

- **Generic learning** – this component ensures Diploma learners develop and apply the broad skills and knowledge necessary for further learning, employment and personal development. It includes:
 - personal, learning and thinking skills
 - at least 10 days' work experience
 - functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)
 - a project.
- **Additional and specialist learning (ASL)** – the ASL component allows learners to select qualifications to include as part of their Diploma programme. The purpose of ASL is to enable young people to personalise their learning according to their ambitions and interests. ASL should support the coherence of a Diploma learner's programme of study and their progression into either employment with training, apprenticeships or further/higher education.



What we've learned



'The Diploma represents a tremendous opportunity to personalise learning. The choice of lines of learning available together with the focus of the project and the timing of functional skills can create a more engaging and personal education experience.'

*Lindi Galloway, 14–19 Development Consultant,
Brighton and Hove 14–19 Partnership Board.*

Project qualification

Allows students to demonstrate the planning, research and presentation skills required by employers and universities. The project is an essential part of any Diploma. The project must be taken at the same level as the Diploma or one level above. Project qualifications are also available as stand-alone qualifications.

Diploma lines of learning

Over four years, 17 lines of learning will be introduced.

Lines of learning

First teaching September 2008

- construction and the built environment
- creative and media
- engineering
- information technology
- society, health and development

First teaching September 2010

- public services
- retail business
- sport and active leisure
- travel and tourism

First teaching September 2009

- business, administration and finance
- environmental and land-based studies
- hair and beauty studies
- hospitality
- manufacturing and product development

First teaching September 2011

- humanities
- languages
- science

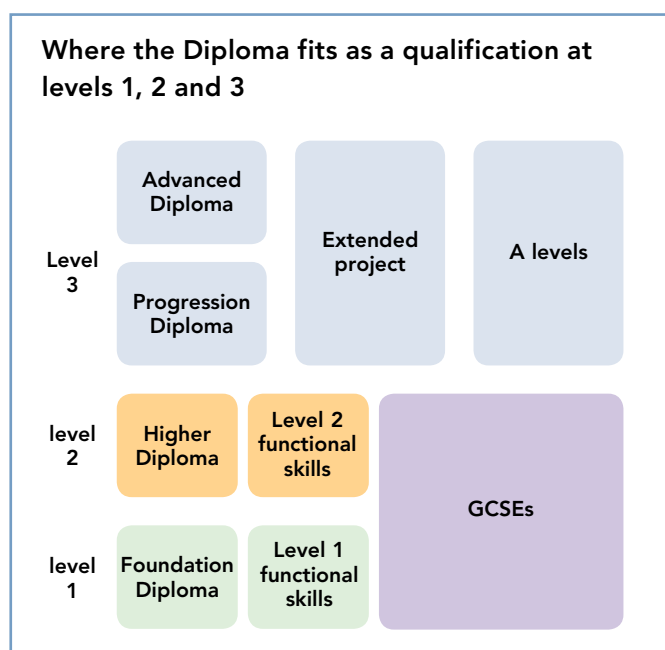


The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has published booklets describing each line of learning. These are available from www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications.

Levels of Diploma

Diplomas are available at levels 1, 2 and 3.

- The **Foundation** Diploma is a level 1 qualification and is equivalent in terms of average length of study to five GCSEs at grades D–G.
- The **Higher** Diploma is a level 2 qualification and is equivalent in terms of average length of study to seven GCSEs at grades A*–C.
- The **Advanced** Diploma is a level 3 qualification and is equivalent in terms of average length of study to three and a half A levels at grades A*–E.
- The **Progression** Diploma is a subset of the Advanced Diploma. It is also a level 3 qualification and is equivalent in terms of average length of study to two and a half A levels at grades A*–E. It contains the same principal learning and generic learning components as the Advanced Diploma but does not include additional and specialist learning.



All Diplomas are available alongside other qualification offers, for example GCSEs, A levels or vocational qualifications.

From 2011 new Extended Diplomas will be available at all three levels and for all 17 lines of learning. The aim of the Extended Diploma is to stretch and challenge the most capable learners and to recognise achievements across the full key stage 4 curriculum. Extended Diplomas will require learners to complete higher level generic learning in English and mathematics, and extra provision in additional and specialist learning.

The structure of the Diploma

Principal learning

A single qualification

Generic learning

Functional skills
Personal, learning and thinking skills
Work experience
Foundation, higher or extended project

Additional and specialist learning

Eligible qualifications that meet a total minimum requirement of guided learning hours

Personal, learning and thinking skills

Comprises six skills for employability designed to enable learners to become:

- self-managers
- team workers
- independent enquirers
- reflective learners
- creative thinkers
- effective participators.

Functional skills

Comprise functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT.

The Diploma requirements are:

- Foundation: level 1 attainment in all three subjects (as part of generic learning)
- Higher: level 2 attainment in all three subjects (as part of generic learning)
- Advanced or Progression: level 2 attainment in all three subjects (functional skills are not taught as part of a level 3 Diploma).

The project (and extended project)

Allows students to demonstrate the planning, research and presentation skills required by employers and universities. The project is an essential part of any Diploma. For the Advanced and Progression Diploma, this will be an extended project qualification.

How Diplomas are assessed

A learner needs to complete the minimum requirements below successfully in terms of constituent qualifications and other achievements in order to achieve a Diploma.

- For all three functional skills, the learner must have passed at the appropriate level (see the panel on the page opposite).
- The learner must have completed personal, learning and thinking skills, work experience and any additional and specialist learning.
- The overall Diploma grade is calculated from the assessment of principal learning and the project.

QCA has developed a *Diploma ready reckoner* tool to show how the components of a Diploma fit together, including the minimum requirements for guided learning hours (GLHs). This is shown in Appendix A.

Each line of learning is available from a number of Diploma awarding bodies. These are the awarding bodies that award the overall Diploma. Centres will select a Diploma awarding body for each learner's Diploma. In some cases, a different Diploma awarding body may have been selected for each line of learning.

Each constituent qualification, including principal learning, is offered by component awarding bodies. There will be a mix of internal assessment (by teaching staff in the consortium) and external assessment such as exams.

The Diploma awarding body will issue the overall Diploma certificate, even though the individual components may have been delivered by other awarding bodies.

Individual centres will decide which component awarding body to use for each constituent qualification.

All Diplomas attract achievement and attainment table (AAT) points, and the Advanced and Progression Diplomas also attract UCAS points. For details of these, see the table in Appendix B.

The next two sections look at the concept of consortia and then how the Diploma will be administered, using new systems. For more detailed information about the Diploma, see Appendix A.

Useful terms

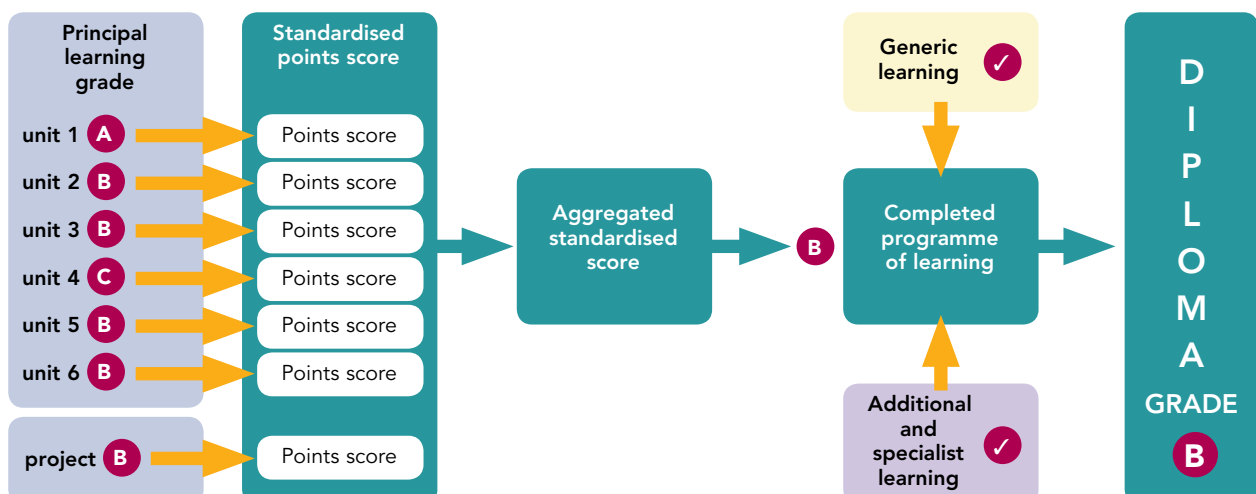
Diploma awarding body (DAB)

Awards the overall Diploma qualification, issuing a transcript and certificate.

Component awarding body (CAB)

Offers and awards the individual qualifications that make up a Diploma, including principal learning, functional skills, and additional and specialist learning qualifications.

From component grades to Diploma grade



2. About Diploma consortia

One of the defining characteristics of Diploma qualifications is that they are typically delivered by a consortium of schools, colleges and other organisations such as work-based learning providers and higher education institutions, working in collaborative partnerships. Consortia bring together a range of local educational opportunities, resources and skills to ensure that learners benefit from the capabilities of several institutions, not just their own centre. Many learners study and are assessed away from their home centre at a different school, college or learning provider, perhaps attending another centre for one day a week or more.

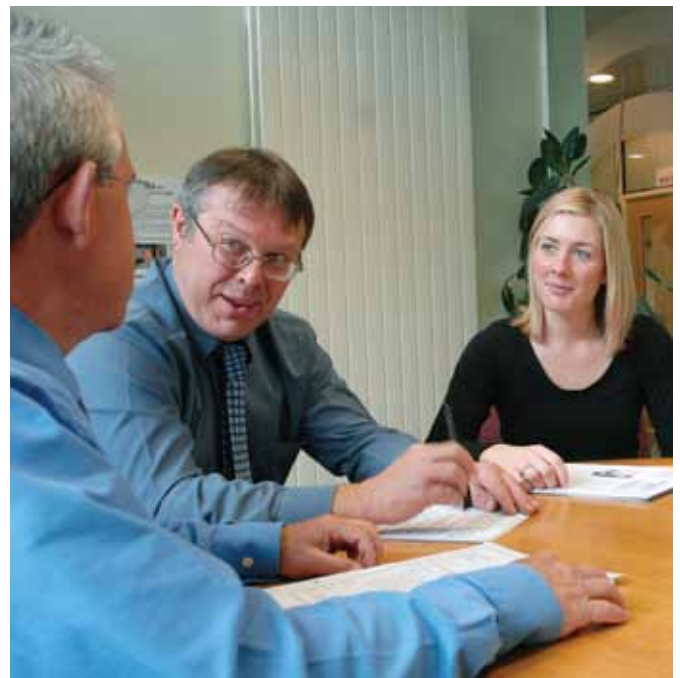
The shape, size and delivery model of consortia will vary considerably in terms of:

- the number of centres working together
- the number of centres involved in teaching
- the involvement of work-based learning providers
- the days per week of collaborative teaching (usually one, sometimes two)
- the approach taken to functional skills, the project, additional and specialist learning and work experience.

A single centre might be involved in different consortia to offer different lines of learning, for example partnering with four centres to offer learners a Diploma in hair and beauty studies and five different centres to offer a Diploma in construction and the built environment.

Work-based learning providers could provide principal learning and more elements of a learner's Diploma, as is the case in Bolton Local Authority consortia, where training providers offer the principal learning, project, functional skills and additional and specialist learning for each Diploma learner.

Further information about consortia is available in *Design for success: Consortia planning* (QCA/08/3988) from QCA.



Useful terms

Consortium

For the purposes of this guide, consortium means a partnership of schools, colleges and other partners working together to deliver at least one Diploma line of learning. If your centre is offering more than one line of learning, this may involve your centre being a member of more than one consortium in your area. If this is the case, the principles set out in this guide remain the same but will need to be applied to each consortium.



What we've learned

'With Woking Federation's CBE Diploma, it's not just principal learning that is taught and assessed away from the home centre. The project and the functional skills in ICT are the same. The way we share making the entries might have worried us a year ago, but it feels quite natural now. That's what comes with having a common perspective on the problem.'

Woking Federation Consortium.

The structure of a consortium

To offer the Diploma, consortia must get authorisation from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) via the Diploma Gateway.

Working as a consortium requires a joined-up approach to planning and decision making. The fundamental elements that consortia need to agree are:

- how they will deliver principal learning
- how the consortium will be managed and administered.

To oversee these processes, consortia typically set up a joint body, which will take responsibility for day-to-day development and have authority to make policy decisions and steer progress. In most cases, this body will consist of deputies or equivalent from all centres involved. Their decisions will affect timetabling, student advice, work experience, finance, communications and, of course, the work of exams officers.

It is important for exams officers to know who in their consortium is responsible for the various decisions and for providing the right information. This is covered in detail in section 5. Getting ready: Preparation.

Insight

Local authorities that started offering Diplomas in September 2008 have found that successful administration hinges on clear links between the leaders who make the decisions and exams officers who carry out the work. Where an individual at local authority or consortium level worked directly with the exams officers, the progress of the whole group was swifter and more efficient.

Useful terms

Diploma Gateway process

This is the approval process through which all consortia must pass in order to offer one or more lines of learning for the Diploma. Gateway 3 results will have been announced in March 2009. The Gateway is managed by the DCSF for all consortia planning to offer the Diploma from September 2010.

Sharing responsibility

The nature of consortium working means that there is a need for shared responsibility.

- Centres share the responsibility for teaching Diploma qualifications.
- Exams officers share the responsibility for managing the administration of these qualifications on behalf of their candidates.

Responsibilities of the exams officer depend on where the learner comes from. If a candidate from your centre is taking Diploma qualifications at your centre, your responsibilities are similar to traditional exams officer duties. However, where your centre is hosting assessments for learners from elsewhere, the responsibilities are different. Exams officers will also have specific responsibilities for learners from their centre who are assessed at other centres.

It is important that everyone within a consortium knows who is responsible for what, for each assessment. The nature of this shared responsibility is covered in greater detail in section 6. Getting ready: Agreement. There is also a QCA tool available, the *Consortium exam policy generator*, to help identify and allocate responsibilities for each task.

Managing learners and recording achievements

Because learners are operating across different centres and being assessed for qualifications by many different organisations, it is vital that there is a single way of identifying those learners and recording their achievements. To enable this, two new administrative services have been introduced:

- the *Learner registration service*
- the *Diploma aggregation service (DAS)*.

See section 3. The Diploma: New administrative systems for more information.

What we've learned



'We're delivering the principal learning for IT on behalf of a number of local schools. For the other Diplomas our students are being taught elsewhere.

The combinations of centres that I work with are different for each line of learning. But it really doesn't matter as the division of work breaks down quite naturally.'

Jenny Abbott, Exams Officer, Djanogly City Academy, Nottingham.

Developing the offer to learners

Consortia are required to make sure that learners are able to find out:

- what lines of learning are available in their local area
- what levels they are taught at
- where they will be taught.

Consortium management should select which of the full range of available additional and specialist learning qualifications (published in the Diploma catalogues) they plan to offer for each type of Diploma. The choices of additional and specialist learning available to learners within a particular line of learning may then be determined by the home centre where the learner is enrolled.

The local Diploma prospectus – an example

The Nottingham City Diploma prospectuses not only describe how the Diploma works but also give lots more information on the lines of learning available in the city, including which centres provide the teaching. Students are invited to Diploma exhibitions to learn more about the Diplomas on offer and discuss their interest at an options evening at their own school or college. Students sign up to their chosen Diploma, following a one-to-one interview to determine whether the Diploma is the right choice for them. Cohort lists are then available by the end of April prior to Diploma studies commencing in September. Find out whether your local authority has published a Diploma prospectus. It may be printed or web-based.

Useful terms

Diploma catalogues

Contain the range of constituent qualifications that can be combined to make up a Diploma. There is a catalogue for each Diploma by line of learning and level. Through browsing individual qualifications in the catalogues, it is possible to find out information such as number of units, assessment models and guided learning hours. Consortia will consult these catalogues when deciding which qualifications to offer to Diploma learners. The catalogues are part of an online database of qualifications at www.ndaq.org.uk.



3. The Diploma: New administrative systems

To ensure learners benefit from the best facilities and relevant teaching expertise from across the consortium, Diploma learning is delivered and assessed across multiple centres. Exams officers within a consortium need to manage assessment administration in new ways to ensure exams and assessments take place successfully at the right venue.

There are two new IT systems that enable exams officers to manage learner information. QCA will provide training in these systems for exams officers in July and September 2009. These systems are:

- the *Diploma aggregation service*, managed by QCA
- the *Learner registration service (LRS)*, managed by Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP), which provides and supports the unique learner number.

To use these services your centre must register with both. For more details on registration see www.qca.org.uk/agreements and www.miap.gov.uk/lrs/.

The Diploma aggregation service

The DAS is a web-based service that stores results for all qualifications of a learner's Diploma within an individual learner account. The learner account holds details of the line of learning, the level of Diploma being taken and the learner's results and other achievements.

When all components have been completed and a claim for an award is made, the service aggregates the learner's achievements that have been registered within the account and calculates an overall grade so that a Diploma awarding body can award the Diploma.

One of the exams officer's responsibilities is to open a learner account within the Diploma aggregation service for every Diploma learner in their centre.

The unique learner number and the Learner registration service

The ULN identifies a learner so that his or her achievements can be properly recorded and a valid award made. It is a 10-digit number, which a learner will be allocated once and will retain for life. The number when required for a qualification, for example a Diploma or functional skills, is obtained from the LRS or the DCSF Key to Success website. The number is unique, anonymous and secure.

The ULN is essential for recording each Diploma learner's achievements in the DAS and must be used when opening a learner account. Some schools may have already obtained ULNs through the DCSF Key to Success website.

Exams officers are responsible for requesting a ULN from the LRS or the DCSF Key to Success website – or checking to see if one has already been allocated to the learner.

How these services support the qualifications process

Exams officers make assessment entries for learners for each of the necessary constituent qualifications, using the relevant awarding body entry processes. Centres in consortia are required to use the ULN for all entries (including GCSEs and A levels) for their Diploma learners. However, you may find that some awarding bodies accept the ULN for some qualifications outside a Diploma course of study.

Component awarding bodies add qualification results to the learner account as they are completed.

Component awarding bodies will use the student's ULN provided with the assessment entries to match results to the right learner account. The achievement of personal, learning and thinking skills and work experience are entered into learner accounts by exams officers or another nominated staff member in the consortium.

Once all components of a Diploma are completed, the exams officer (or another nominated staff member) may claim an award from a Diploma awarding body on behalf of the learner.

What we've learned



'I thought that getting ULNs and opening learner accounts was going to be a lot harder. I found I could fit in opening them around other things that

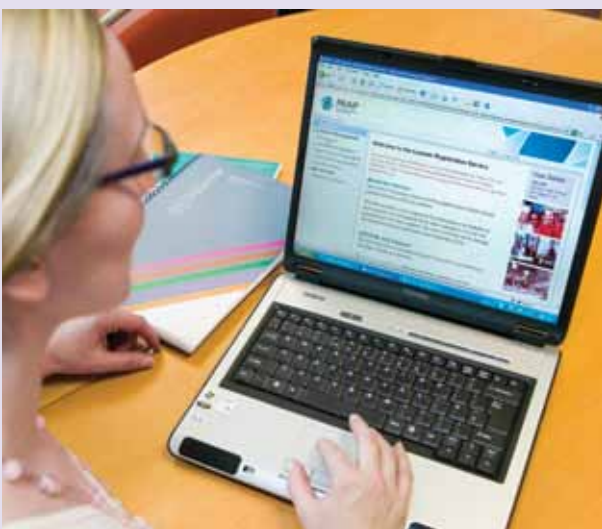
I do in the autumn term.'

Carol Hayes, Middleton Technology School, Rochdale.

Good practice

Check that your centre is registered with both the LRS and the DAS. This will require action from your head of centre. Find out more at www.qca.org.uk/agreements.

- Read QCA's fact sheet about the ULN. This can be downloaded from www.qca.org.uk/qca_15894.aspx
- Read about the DAS in the fact sheet available from www.qca.org.uk/qca_15894.aspx
- Look out for information about specific QCA training and guidance on using the DAS from the Diploma resources pages – www.qca.org.uk/diplomaresources
- Find out more about the LRS and the ULN on the MIAP website www.miap.gov.uk/lrs/



QCA will provide training for exams officers later this year. This will cover tasks involved in managing Diploma administration, including:

- opening a learner account in the DAS using the learner's ULN
- in the learner account, identifying the Diploma awarding body selected to award the Diploma for the line of learning
- entering learners for assessments directly with the relevant awarding bodies (this will be done using relevant awarding body processes, not the DAS)
- recording achievement of personal, learning and thinking skills and work experience in the learner account
- notifying the Diploma awarding body of an automatic intention to claim an overall Diploma award, if one has been set, with the permission of the learner and with reference to the learner's course adviser. Alternatively if an intention to claim has not been set, making a manual award claim once the learner has completed their Diploma.

4. Getting ready: Preparation, agreement and action

Getting ready for Diploma administration requires careful planning and changes in ways of working – not least because of the need for coordination between exams officers in different centres in the consortium. To help new consortia through this process, QCA has identified a common approach to Diploma management and administration that has proved of real value to those consortia that have introduced the Diploma to date.



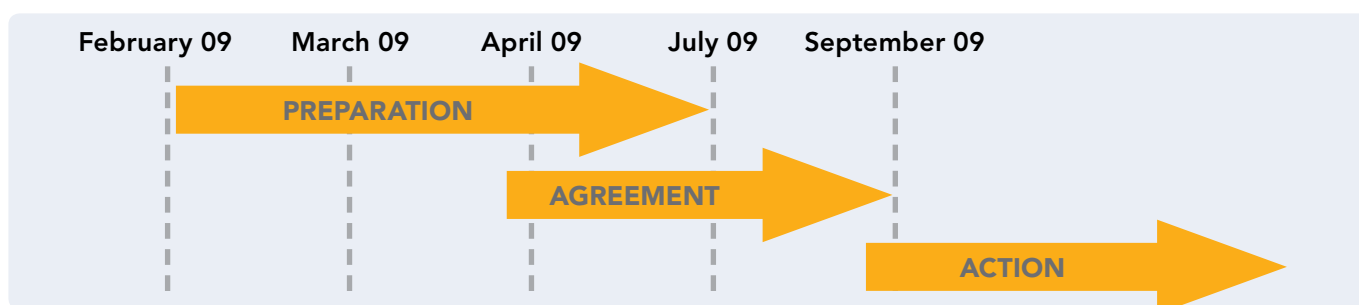
This common approach, defined as 'preparation, agreement and action', not only helps exams officers understand their role but also simplifies progress tracking and means that unexpected events are easier to spot and deal with.

Preparation

In the preparation phase, your role as an exams officer is to understand the role your centre will play in Diploma delivery. The key questions are as follows.

- Which lines of learning are offered to learners and at what level? Where will they be taught?
- Which lines of learning and levels are being taught at your centre? Which other centres will send their learners to your centre? Which other centres will receive learners from your centre?
- Who in each centre will be responsible for providing essential information on learners and qualifications?

It is never too early to start preparation. Some exams officers groups start to meet soon after receiving Gateway approval. For most, however, the preparation stage begins in earnest in the spring term before first teaching in September.



Agreement

In the agreement phase, you will agree how responsibilities will be shared between exams officers in different centres.

- Which exams office will carry out each activity on behalf of learners?
- Which decisions can be made by exams officers and where are consortium-wide policies needed?

What we've learned

'Having a common approach and common forms used across centres makes it all more consistent and easier to achieve. But you do also need a Dan Brown!'

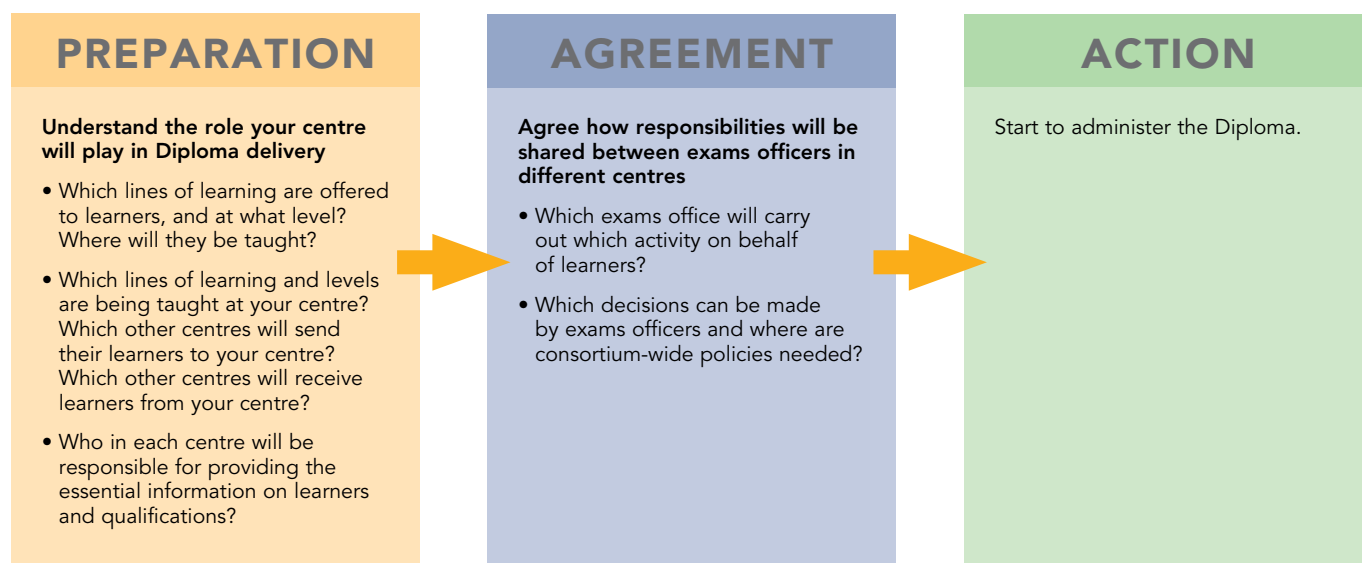
*Exams officers in Woking's Diploma federation
– Dan is their 14–19 coordinator.*

Action

The action phase is where you start to administer the Diploma. This is covered in more detail in a separate QCA guide. Exams officers are also invited to attend a dedicated training event at which training in using the DAS, the ULN and the LRS will be provided.

Supporting the common approach

To support this common approach, QCA has created a Consortium centre planner for use by exams officers in all centres involved in the Diploma. The first part provides a step-by-step guide to preparations, prompting exams officers to ask all the key questions. The second half of the planner identifies the administrative steps needed and allocates each step to one or other exams office. You can download the planner from www.qca.org.uk/diplomaresources.



The next three sections of this guide cover preparation, agreement and action in more detail.

5. Getting ready: Preparation

The preparation phase enables exams officers to understand their centre's role in the Diploma. It involves:

- forming a group of exams officers working together
- creating links with the leadership of the consortium
- building a comprehensive list of who you will rely on for information
- identifying how you will share information with your colleagues in your home centre and across the exams officers group.

The *Consortium centre planner* guides you through this planning process.

PREPARATION

Understand the role your centre will play in Diploma delivery

- Which lines of learning are offered to learners, and at what level? Where will they be taught?
- Which lines of learning and levels are being taught at your centre? Which other centres will send their learners to your centre? Which other centres will receive learners from your centre?
- Who in each centre will be responsible for providing the essential information on learners and qualifications?

Understanding your centre's role

As an exams officer you have a crucial role to play. It is highly likely that your centre will cooperate with other local institutions, including not only schools and colleges but also training providers or local businesses providing work-related qualifications or work experience.

To help support your centre and learners, you will need to know first:

- what lines of learning your centre's learners will follow and where your learners will go
- what lines of learning your centre will offer and which centres will be sending learners to your centre
- what qualifications make up the Diploma in each line of learning and at each level.

From here, you will then need to identify who will provide lists of your learners by line of learning and level.

In order to work collaboratively, you will need to gather contact details of relevant people involved in administration, teaching and assessment. These include:

- fellow exams officers in the consortium
- contacts in work-based learning providers
- consortium leadership contacts
- work experience coordinators
- advisers providing learner information and guidance
- domain assessors
- line of learning leaders.

Although it may not be possible to gather all this information at once, you should start early and pool your knowledge with exams office colleagues in other centres.

The *Consortium centre planner* will guide you through the process of gathering the right information.

Insight

Exams officers occupy a pivotal position in Diploma administration – supporting assessment and providing vital links with other centres, outside of the consortium leadership group. To enable you to fulfil your role, you will need access to a range of information so that you are as fully informed as possible. Valuable sources of information for you include:

- the 14–19 coordinator in your centre (often a deputy head or principal)
- the 14–19 coordinator for your consortium or local authority
- consortium notices, newsletters or websites
- school or college notices, newsletters or websites
- the consortium Diploma offer
- the other exams officers in your consortium
- lines of learning leaders, lead assessors and domain assessors
- learners' advisers
- your QCA centre support officer.

It is often the case that the same people you identify as key contacts for you to get information from will also be dependent on you for information they need for their job.

Collaborating to support learner choice

The chosen line of learning for each Diploma is defined by its principal learning qualification (for example engineering or hair and beauty studies). This is a brand new qualification and few centres currently have the capacity to teach the sector-related content. As a result, this lack of capacity is often the trigger for collaborative working, with learners needing to travel to other centres to receive their learning.

In some cases, the other qualifications that make up the Diploma (such as functional skills, additional and specialist learning and the project) can be taught at the home centre – meaning that collaboration is only focused on principal learning. Where this is the case, students will typically only travel to other centres for a single day a week.

What we've learned



'The local authority has set up a website containing information on the consortium. It includes the Diploma implementation plan for Rochdale, outlining which types of Diploma are being offered and where. It also contains key information contacts, including the programme director for each line of learning and the exams officer from each centre.'

Peter Owen, Rochdale Consortium.

Some consortia are collaborating across more qualifications. For example, a work-based learning provider may offer a vocationally oriented qualification to learners from elsewhere as part of additional and specialist learning or a centre with a specialty in modern languages could offer a language GCSE to others as part of additional and specialist learning. The project may be offered alongside principal learning and, in some cases, functional skills may be offered outside of the home centre.

It is up to each consortium to agree how its member institutions will collaborate with each other. But to help you understand fully how your learners will receive their education, you can use the *consortium centre planner*, which prompts the right questions.

Working with awarding bodies

For all qualifications, it is important to establish which awarding body and specification is to be used, so the right process is followed. Diplomas consist of many different constituent qualifications, so you may have to work with several awarding bodies. Depending on the line of learning, for principal learning and the project, you might work with:

- AQA – City & Guilds
- Edexcel
- EDI
- OCR
- VTCT
- WJEC.

With functional skills and additional and specialist learning, the choice of awarding bodies is much greater.

Useful terms

Lead and domain assessors

Within your consortium, a 'lead assessor' and a number of 'domain assessors' may have been identified. Domain assessors are responsible for quality assuring the internal assessment carried out on the principal learning and project qualifications for a particular Diploma line of learning. A lead assessor, if identified, will be responsible for coordinating and overseeing the work of the domain assessors. Domain assessors can be useful sources of information for exams officers on the scheduling and location of internal assessments. QCA has produced written guidance for lead and domain assessors which can be found at www.qca.org.uk/internalassessment.



The consortium delivery plan

In general, a consortium delivery plan is created by consortium leaders to support the consortium's application to the Gateway process and set out how all the components of a Diploma – especially principal learning and the project – are to be delivered at a local level.

There are a number of elements within a good consortium delivery plan that makes it invaluable to exams officers, including:

- a plan of offsite learning that shows which home centres will send learners to other centres and work-based learning providers for their learning
- a list of names and contact details of those responsible for different aspects of delivery. These contacts will be particularly important when the exams officers need lists of learners or dates of assessments.

Note: although it is called the consortium delivery plan for the purposes of this guide, it might be known by a different name in your consortium.



PREPARATION – ARE YOU READY?	Yes	Under way	No
Do you understand the Diploma qualification as described in section 1. The Diploma: What you need to know?			
Are you aware of the new administration systems described in section 3. The Diploma: New administrative systems?			
Do you know and understand the delivery plan for your consortium?			
Are you a member of a consortium-wide exams officers group?			
Have you contacted the person who will provide learner cohort details?			
Have you contacted the person who will provide information on assessment types, locations and timings?			

5.1 Forming an exams officers group

The single most important ingredient for managing the successful administration of the Diploma is an exams officers group that works effectively across centres. Experience to date has shown that consortia with a well-managed and efficient group can plan their work effectively and are well equipped to deal with the unexpected.

Experience has also shown that the attendance of a 14–19 coordinator at exams officers group meetings, with links to the consortium leadership, will help ensure that exams officers receive up-to-date information about consortium-wide decisions. It also helps secure contact between exams officers and other key centre staff.

The nature of the exams officers group depends on the size of the consortium and level of overlap between consortia or even between local authorities. Smaller consortia of between four and 10 centres, such as those in mid-sized towns like Canterbury, Woking and Rochdale, enable exams officers to work in close collaboration and more flexibly. With good support from local leadership, they can often make decisions rapidly and securely. In many instances exams officers will have worked together before so the formation of a Diploma consortium group will happen naturally.

In larger towns, cities or semi-rural areas (such as Nottingham, Norwich and North Hertfordshire) there may be between 12 and 20 centres within a consortium. These often form smaller sub-groups or clusters of six to eight centres each. It is important that these smaller groups recognise the potential impact of their decisions on the other groups.

In general, the larger the group, the harder it is for everyone to agree policies and approaches. That is where an exams office agreement – covered in the next section of this guide – can really help.



What we've learned

'Our consortium has a coordinator who liaises with leadership team members responsible for curriculum in each of the centres that has students participating in the Diploma. I regularly communicate with our leadership team member to receive updates. Exams officers within the consortium attend a meeting (approximately once per term) to discuss admin procedures and requirements. The coordinator is usually present for these meetings as is our QCA support officer. Our consortium exam policy was generated during a meeting of this group.'

Eve Chapman, Woking Federation Consortium.

Insight

One of the key factors that has emerged over the last year is the importance of an effective link between exams officers groups and the consortium or local authority leadership. This link will ensure you are aware of overall policy and developments and have a channel for feeding back to the consortium leadership. In most consortia, at least one 14–19 coordinator in one of the centres will be well placed to create the link.

If you do not have a link already in place, consider making this an agenda item for your next group meeting. The guidance provided to consortium leadership stresses the importance of leaders supporting the exams officers group, so they are likely to be responsive. In many instances the consortium will have a dedicated coordinator who is not connected to a specific centre. If so, involving this coordinator in exams officers group meetings will pay dividends.

Many consortia have also selected one representative from the exams officers group to take part in consortium operational meetings. In addition to providing good information flow, the exams office representative is able to see how decisions are made and understand how best to make the exams office case.

Good practice

Be prepared to take a proactive role in the forming of the group. If your centre is joining a pre-existing consortium, ensure you join the established exams officers group.

Make contact with exams officers colleagues in your consortium and exchange contact details.

Find out whether a member of the consortium management team has been assigned responsibility for exams office operations. If so, liaise with this person on the formation of the exams officers group and include them in its activities.

Champion two-way communication between the group and consortium management, perhaps using the management member with special responsibility for exams office operations (if one has been assigned) as a link person.

Look out for news and decisions affecting the consortium and feed exams office advice, questions and requests back.

What we've learned



'It's important that decision-making groups have people that understand the impact in other areas. Jane Dorrian, the exams officer at Darton High School, attends our half-termly curriculum meetings. As a consequence, information flows naturally to the right place – not as a result of a bureaucratic process.'

*Jane Fisher, 14–19 Senior Consultant,
11–19 Project Team,
Barnsley Diploma Consortium.*

What we've learned



'There is a representative from the deputy heads consortium team who attends our exams officers meeting. He originally came to our meeting to ask us questions for a meeting he had the following week with the deputy heads. Both groups have found it useful having a link so both parties are aware of what is being discussed and where the consortium is going next. We are using this link as a way of informing the deputy heads of the examination boards' deadlines so that decisions can be made in time. He is now a regular at our meetings.'

*Anne-Marie Kinsella-Calverley, Hyndburn,
Rossendale and Ribble Valley Consortium.*

Sharing information

The nature of offering Diploma qualifications across a consortium means that learner and assessment information needs to be reliable and available to the right people at the right time. The exams officers group will need to establish protocols for sharing and checking information.

Each home centre should make its Diploma learners aware that their ULN data will be shared between different centres within the consortium. Check if this permission is covered by the fair processing notice your centre already uses to exchange learner information.

The fair processing notice may be issued to learners in different ways, for example as a document given to each learner or as a notice displayed in the centre. The TeacherNet website offers a format for fair processing notices for school learners (see www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/ims/datamanagement/fpnpupils).

A fair processing notice is also available on the Joint Council for Qualifications website (www.jcq.org.uk).

Sharing information online – a case study



David Comber Canterbury City and Coastal Consortium is delivering two Diplomas (creative and media and environmental and land-based studies) from September 2009.

Because the centres involved are already part of a sixth-form consortium, they have a number of established policies and processes. One of the most important is their approach to information sharing between centres: a secure website, which they also plan to use for managing Diploma information.

Exams officers log into the system where they can view information about all learners that will be taught away from their home centre. Details include learner identification information, (eg name, date of birth, candidate number, year group, home centre) and notes of any access arrangements to which they are entitled as well as information on qualifications and units (name of qualification; registration and award dates; awarding body; award and entry codes). The information is set out in spreadsheets and accessed using a simple folder structure.

The key benefit of the system, as exams officer David Comber explains, is that it removes the risks associated with emailing sensitive learner information between centres. 'It's really helped. We all have access to a single spreadsheet online. We can update it in turn and then email the others to let them know it's been updated.'

To make it work, the exams officers group had to agree a shared approach. 'At the end of the summer term, we individually talk to all relevant teaching staff in our schools to gather entry course information which we then put into a new spreadsheet,' David says. 'We then meet as a consortium group of exams officers to share the information. A designated exams officer collates our individual spreadsheets, together with any corrections from the meeting, and she then posts a master spreadsheet covering all schools, on the online system.'

6. Getting ready: Agreement

The agreement phase enables you as an exams officer to understand what you will need to do to deliver Diplomas in your centre. It also helps you understand what other exams officers in your consortium must do.

At the end of the phase, you should have access to:

- a completed exams office agreement, based on the agreement section of the *Consortium centre planner*, which allocates operational tasks to each exams office
- a consortium exam policy.

AGREEMENT

Agree how responsibilities will be shared between exams officers in different centres

- Which exams office will carry out which activity on behalf of learners?
- Which decisions can be made by exams officers and where are consortium-wide policies needed?

The need for agreement

Because of the collaborative nature of Diplomas, the roles of exams officers are different, compared with managing traditional exams. The home centre – where the learner is registered – is not necessarily the place where the teaching takes place or where the learner is assessed.

This means that as an exams officer, you will have to take on some new tasks and share responsibility for other tasks in the exams cycle.

The exams officer's responsibilities differ, depending on whether they are looking at the centre's role from the perspective of being a home centre, or as an assessment centre, hosting assessments for learners from both the home centre and other centres in the consortium.

- The home centre carries the responsibility for ensuring learner information for its own learners is accurate and up to date.
- The assessment centre has responsibility for information about the qualification.

Most centres will act as both a home centre and an assessment centre. This means that exams officers need to understand the different responsibilities involved. The *Consortium centre planner* helps exams officers to identify where they will manage responsibilities for assessment administration, acting as a home centre and as an assessment centre.



Useful terms

Home centres:

- are the centres where learners are enrolled
- have overall responsibility for their learners
- may also be assessment and/or delivery centres.

Delivery centres:

- are the centres that deliver teaching to learners
- have special facilities/expertise for a particular line of learning
- may also be a learner's home centre and/or assessment centre.

Assessment centres:

- are centres where assessments for each unit take place and where entries will be made
- are, normally, home centres for external assessments and delivery centres for internal assessments
- may also be home or delivery centres.

An example from the Northern Lights consortium in Norwich illustrates the distinctions between these centres.

- A learner from Sprowston Community High School is studying a level 2 Diploma in engineering.
- The principal learning for this Diploma is taught by EAGIT, an independent learning provider.
- EAGIT works closely with The Open Academy, and staff from The Open Academy carry out assessment on behalf of EAGIT. It is the exams officer from The Open Academy that deals with the awarding body.

In this instance the home centre is Sprowston Community High School, the assessment centre is The Open Academy and the delivery centre is EAGIT.

Entries

For all qualifications making up the Diploma, component awarding bodies will usually expect entries to be submitted, with ULNs, by the centre hosting the assessment. This arrangement ensures that course and assessment-related materials are received by the correct centre securely. Awarding bodies will then expect to deal with the assessment centre for moderation, script collection, special consideration applications and enquiries about results. Any alternative arrangements must be agreed with the awarding body concerned.

Completing an exams office agreement

The single most important activity for exams officers during the agreement phase is completing an exams office agreement. This agreement identifies all the day-to-day responsibilities in Diploma administration and allocates responsibility to either the home centre or the assessment centre.

In Appendix C, you can find an exams office agreement template which:

- highlights essential tasks in Diploma administration
- indicates whether, in general, these are better carried out by the home centre or the assessment centre.

This template has been developed in consultation with exams officers and provides a great starting point for setting up an agreement in your consortium.

The broad principles used to allocate responsibility for different tasks are set out below.

Responsibilities of home centres

1. Home centres have overall responsibility for managing learner information. This includes:

- identifying who the learners are
- acquiring ULNs
- opening learner accounts in the *Diploma aggregation service*, and
- making assessment centres aware of this information.

2. For learners requiring access arrangements, home centres should make relevant applications and inform assessment centres of approvals gained.

3. Home centres might need to make any up-front registrations with awarding bodies.

4. Home centres are responsible for liaising with awarding bodies for any assessments that take place at their centre. In general, this means timetabled exams (such as GCSEs or functional skills assessments).

5. Home centres should make suitable provisions for learners with disabilities so that they are not disadvantaged in, or denied access to, any assessment. Where assessment is taking place in another centre, inform that centre of any provision that might need to be made. For more information on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and what this means for the exams office, see www.qca.org.uk/dda.



What we've learned



'We've planned for written exams to take place at the home centre. Timetabling, making candidates comfortable and achieving discipline is easier as students are used to the routines adopted for exams at the home centre. It also makes the process of identifying candidates simpler.'

*Zoe Hardy, Exams Officer,
Kings International College, Camberley.*

Responsibilities of assessment centres

1. Assessment centres are best placed to find out the qualification specifications to be used – especially for principal learning. They should then provide home centres with an assessment plan, indicating the unit assessments to be taken and a timetable of when these should take place. In most cases the domain assessor can provide this information.

2. Assessment centres might need to make any up-front registrations with awarding bodies.

3. Assessment centres should liaise with awarding bodies for any assessments taking place at their centre. This includes making assessment entries for all learners, including those from other home centres.

4. Assessment centres should make suitable provisions for learners with disabilities so that they are not disadvantaged in, or denied access to, any assessment. For more information on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and what this means for the exams office, see www.qca.org.uk/dda.

Agreeing common policies

For Diploma administration to proceed efficiently, it is important that consortium leadership agrees certain common policies.

- **Timing** – to help smooth administration, it is vital that information, such as learner forecasts or accurate learner lists, is made available by all centres within a consortium at the same time.
- **Finance** – as some centres may receive invoices from awarding bodies that relate to another centre's learners, a common process for reconciling and reimbursement of entry fees helps reduce disagreements and accelerate payments.
- **Prior achievement** – consortia will need to agree what previously achieved qualifications should be included in learner accounts, what information is needed about these qualifications and who is responsible for capturing it. See the panel on prior achievement for more details.
- **Results** – it is essential that all centres know how results should be shared and who is responsible for enquiries about results (EARs).
- **Access arrangements** – most consortia will want to establish who is responsible for making sure the right provision is in place for candidates.
- **Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) and work experience** – there are many possible options for managing how these will be captured and recorded in learner accounts.
- **Information sharing** – because effective Diploma administration depends on effective learner information flow from centre to centre, and some of this information may be sensitive or covered by the Data Protection Act 1998, it is vital to agree information exchange practices that are both easy to use and compliant.

The key things to agree in each case are who is covered by the policy, who is responsible for it and any key dates or timings for core activities.

These policies will generally be developed at consortium leadership level during the agreement phase, in partnership with the local authority. However, because it will be up to exams officers to implement the policies, it is really valuable for at least one representative exams officer to be involved in discussions around policy if this is possible.

Useful terms

Prior achievement

The Diploma qualification allows for the inclusion of constituent qualifications that have been achieved by a learner after 1 January 2005 if they are in the Diploma catalogue for that line of learning and level or a historic version of the Diploma catalogue. Prior achievement also refers to qualifications that are relevant to the Diploma achieved prior to the opening of a learner account. Contact the relevant component awarding body for further information. Exams officers should apply to the awarding body that awarded the qualification and ask them to record the achievement in the learner account, using the correct ULN. More detail on this process will be provided in forthcoming QCA guidance and training.

What we've learned



'The core work in exams-related policy has been worked through between myself, Jane Dorrian the exams officer at Darton High School and a small number of other representative exams officers from the schools and the college – with a lot of help from our QCA centre support officer.'

*Jane Fisher, 14–19 Senior Consultant,
11–19 Barnsley Diploma Consortia.*

The Consortium exam policy generator

Consortia can use the *Consortium exam policy generator*, a QCA tool that guides users through the development of exams related policy. The generator helps consortium policy makers outline relevant policies and determine whether each item of policy applies to all centres and lines of learning or whether there will be variations between centres or between lines. Where a consortium does not have an existing exam policy, it can give exams officers direct involvement in creating policies that affect their work.

The *Consortium exam policy generator* covers activities that exams officers and their colleagues will need to carry out during Diploma administration, for example registrations, entries and access arrangements. The policy allows the consortium to establish the principles by which it will operate and to identify the key persons who will ensure that this happens. It also allows clarification of specific procedures to be followed by centres.

The tool can be downloaded from www.qca.org.uk/cepg.



The screenshot shows the 'Consortium exam policy generator' web interface. At the top, it says 'Please select an option below:'. Below this is a section titled 'What would you like to do?'. There are two radio button options: 'I wish to start a new policy' and 'I wish to recover an existing policy'. A 'Next >' button is located below the options.

Insight

For larger consortia with numerous lines of learning and hundreds of learners, formal policies are vital to avoid errors and miscommunication. However, setting up formal policies may seem to be unnecessarily bureaucratic for consortia with only a couple of lines of learning or a small number of learners.

In these circumstances, agreeing just a couple of key policies is often a good way to start and as learner numbers increase in future years, informal approaches can be adapted into formal policies.

This is the approach many of the initial consortia adopted and they have now tightened up their policies from the second year of operation.

What we've learned



'I used a QCA tool to help create our Diploma exam and assessment policy. I initially discussed issues with my deputy head then organised a meeting with the other exams officers in the consortium. We felt that there are certain decisions that only exams officers can make (ie which centre would make the unit examination entries). Any decisions that needed joint decisions were sent via the representative from the deputy heads consortium team. We also all felt that the policy would be a work in progress for the first year and we are constantly updating it as we find out new information.'

Anne-Marie Kinsella-Calverley, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley Consortium.



Good practice

If a member of the consortium management team has been allocated responsibility for exams office operations, the exams officers group should work closely with him or her to help research and agree the roles and responsibilities of different centres.

With your exams officer colleagues, carefully cross-check the information you have on qualifications where assessment affects learners at more than one centre. Because you need consistent information to adopt a shared approach, be sure to clarify any inconsistencies.

Focus first on principal learning, then when agreement is reached on this, extend the plan to cover other qualifications.

If your centre is joining a pre-existing consortium, there may already be a consortium exams policy in place. If so, review the policy to see if it can be updated to accommodate your centre.



AGREEMENT – ARE YOU READY?	Yes	Under way	No
If a member of the consortium management team has been assigned responsibility for exams office operations, have you enlisted their support in agreeing home and assessment centre responsibilities?			
Do you know how you will find out whether work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills have been achieved?			
Have roles and responsibilities of home and assessment centres been agreed within the exams officers group?			
Have you either reviewed your consortium's existing exams policy or agreed how you can contribute to drafting a policy if one is not already in place?			
Have you completed your <i>Consortium centre planner</i> ?			

7. Getting ready: Action

The action phase is where exams officers carry out the administration of the Diploma. These actions normally start in September although, depending on your consortium, it may be possible to carry out some activities before the end of the summer term.

ACTION

Start to administer the Diploma.



Because you will receive a separate QCA guide, *Administering the Diploma*, later this year, which covers this stage in full, this guide simply outlines the main tasks that you will need to think about.

Exams officers will also be invited to attend the dedicated training on managing Diploma administration. QCA will continue to provide guidance and support throughout the assessment year. See section 10 Support available from QCA for more details.

Registering your centre to use the *Learner registration service* and the *Diploma aggregation service*

Early in the summer term, your head of centre should register your centre with these two core services. Each centre must nominate a person to be a super user for the *Learner registration service* and a local administrator for the *Diploma aggregation service*. Normally, both roles are fulfilled by an exams officer.

As the super user and/or local administrator, you will be able to create a network of users to update information and view information about your learners.

For more information on these two services, see section 3. The Diploma: New administrative systems of this guide.

Capturing learner cohort information

Most consortia will set a cut-off date for learners to sign up for Diplomas. Once this date has passed, the exams officer in each home centre should:

- receive a full list of learners by line of learning and level
- obtain ULNs and open learner accounts for each learner
- share cohort lists with all other providers involved in teaching and assessments.

For the year 11 group, it is quite possible that learners could move to new home centres from September.

Capturing qualification details

Because there are typically several different qualifications and awarding bodies involved in each line of learning and each level within a consortium, it is vital that all centres involved know what these are. It is up to assessment centres to pass on the relevant information to home centres as soon as possible. As well as information about which awarding bodies are being used, home centres will need to know the sequence of units to be taught and assessed, and as much detail as possible on the qualifications' and units' specifications. For principal learning, this information could be included in an assessment plan, compiled by the domain assessor or leader for each line of learning.

Working with the awarding bodies

Some awarding bodies require learners to be registered with them before they can take a qualification. This is particularly the case for some principal learning qualifications. Home centres are responsible for working with the awarding bodies to make sure all such requirements are met.

Insight

Early in the autumn term, learners are often given a copy of their individual learning plan – a document bringing together all the information about the different qualifications they must complete to achieve a Diploma.

Experience has shown that these plans are not only valuable for learners but exams officers too, as they help monitor learners' progress. Therefore, it is a good idea to try and get a copy of the individual learning plan for each learner in your home centre and share it, where relevant, with other centres in the consortium.

QCA has created a template for the individual learning plan, which is available from www.qca.org.uk/diplomaresources.

What we've learned



'We've improved our learner recruitment process for learners starting the Diploma in September 2009. We expect to have lists of cohorts by the end of April.'

Andy Mullahy, 14-19 Qualifications Support Officer, Nottingham City Council.

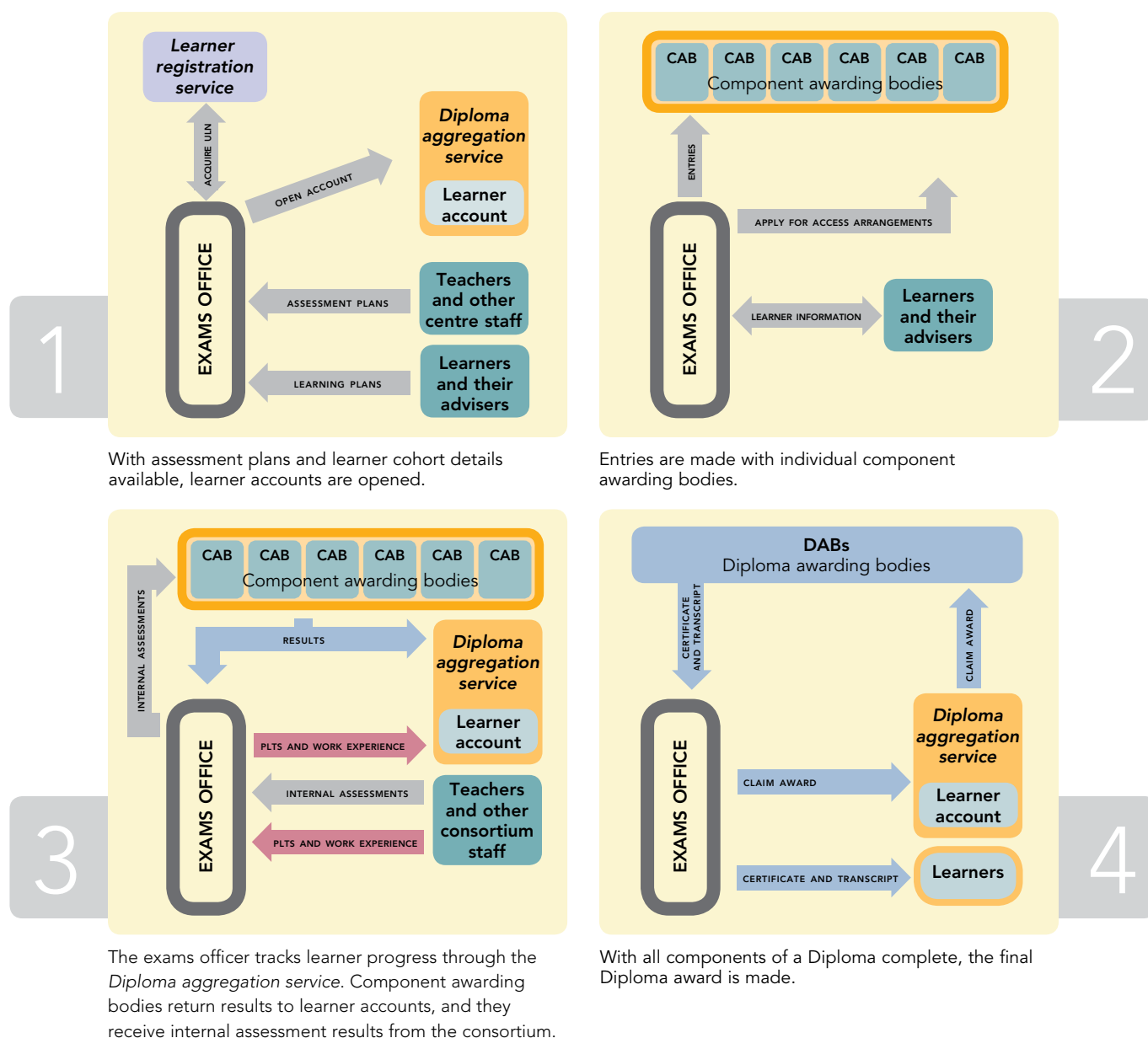
What we've learned



'The deputy heads consortium team decided which awarding bodies we would use, and this was communicated at one of our exams officers meetings. The deputy heads then created a calendar-based spreadsheet, which references all the Diploma units and assessment dates. With the Diploma being new this calendar is being amended regularly. The calendar gives me the information I need to know about which centre is delivering the units and when to expect the results for each of the units.'

Anne-Marie Kinsella-Calverley, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley Consortium.

Exams officer interactions for Diploma administration



What we've learned



'The learning plans provided by QCA have been used to collect and provide information. These are updated by our Diploma administrator. We have altered these as we go along, for instance providing line of learning leads with information, such as access arrangements, legal names of pupils as well as additional learning taken in school.'

Helen Pearcey, Furness 14-19 Partnership.

Good practice

Review any learner guidance material. All consortia are expected to provide information to learners to explain the options available to them.

Review how learners are being advised. Are there events planned for year 9 and year 11 in the spring term? Are curriculum leaders carrying out any promotional activity?

Find out how any updates to learner cohort information will be communicated to the exams office throughout the year.

Check that cohort lists are complete and consistent. In particular, watch out for things like inconsistent use of a shortened first name and its full equivalent (for example, Dave and David), which can cause confusion when dealing with the *Learner registration service* and other organisations.



CAPTURING LEARNER COHORT INFORMATION – ARE YOU READY?

Have you received details of which learners have registered for each line of learning and for each level of Diploma?

Have you received cohort details for every constituent qualification?

Is there a process in place to ensure learner cohort information is kept up to date?

Yes

Under way

No



CAPTURING QUALIFICATION DETAILS – ARE YOU READY?

Have you received an assessment plan showing the method and timing of assessments in detail for each line of learning and Diploma level?

Has a communications channel been established between line of learning leaders or domain assessors and the exams officers group to relay any changes to the assessment plan?

Yes

Under way

No



ACTION – ARE YOU READY?

Has your centre registered with the *Diploma aggregation service* and the *Learner registration service* and nominated users for both systems?

Have you attended QCA training on use of the *Diploma aggregation service* and the *Learner registration service*?

Have you received learner cohort information for all lines of learning and levels of Diploma?

Have you received assessment plan information?

Yes

Under way

No

8. The role of consortium leadership and operations

Strong and communicative consortium leadership is essential for successful Diploma administration. This is particularly important at the outset of setting up a new consortium because introducing Diplomas presents a significant change to how exams officers work.



What we've learned



'Consortium leaders need to engage the diverse talents of all those around them. Exams officers are a prime example of support workers who have huge expertise in overcoming practical difficulties that might arise and they should be contributing to planning discussions.'

*Dr Sharon Goddard,
14–19 Education Adviser for the East of England.*

Though QCA does not define how leadership should work, guidance – from both the DCSF and the local government offices – has identified some key responsibilities of the leadership, from the exams officer's perspective. These include:

- ensuring exams officers are kept informed of decisions made
- enabling exams officers to attend relevant training
- providing dedicated support, from the leadership team, to the exams officers group, and
- giving exams officers an opportunity to have a say in decisions that affect them and give feedback.

Below are some of the key areas for involving exams officers and ensuring they are informed. In general, the role of leadership is not to provide the exams community with information itself, but rather to ensure that those people responsible for providing information to exams officers do so.

Communicating within the consortium

As the consortium structure begins to take shape and it is clear which centres will be involved, it is important that exams officers have access to this information. Knowledge of the consortium's structure will help them understand their role and enable them to begin to build links with each other and other key personnel within the consortium.

Then, as key roles and responsibilities are defined, these too should be well communicated. For example, QCA guidance for exams officers promotes the appointment of a consortium lead assessor, who will be responsible for all assessment practices within the consortium, and a number of domain assessors responsible for different lines of learning. The people in these roles will work closely with exams officers to provide assessment information and organise moderation of internal assessments. In addition, the management group may appoint an individual with responsibility for exams office operations. This person would be a valuable source of information and support for the exams officers group.

Sharing timescales and milestones

Consortium leaders should have a delivery plan with clear milestones. This information is often valuable for exams officers, particularly around:

- when awarding bodies will be selected, as this is a key start point for many exams office tasks
- when learners will sign up for Diplomas, as this will help to confirm numbers and learner details for sharing with other centres.

It is therefore good practice for consortium leadership to ensure that delivery plans and milestones are shared with exams officers.

Setting up common policies

Most consortia develop policies across a range of activities, such as timetabling, finances, student behaviour and so on. In a number of areas, consistent policies between centres simplify the management of Diploma administration, such as:

- agreeing a safe and secure process for exchanging learner information between centres that complies with data protection obligations
- confirming how and when Diploma learners will be provided with individual learning plans.

Section 6. Getting ready: Agreement includes more detail on the kind of policies that need to be agreed – and in particular those that should be determined early as they affect activities at the beginning in the autumn term.

It makes sense for consortium leaders to involve exams officers in defining these policies as they will directly affect the way the exams officers in the consortium work with one another.

Insight

There are some areas where decisions must be made as soon as possible. This is because they involve work that will be carried out by exams officers early in the autumn term. Therefore policy priorities should be to agree who is responsible for:

- providing accurate learner information by line of learning and by level
- confirming which awarding body will be used for principal learning, the project and any other qualifications that will be delivered or accessed collaboratively
- documenting individual learning plans so that all centres involved know what the learner is doing and how it will result in a valid Diploma award.

What we've learned



'If you're not an exams officer, it's hard to predict the information they need. It's so useful to get them together and listen to their questions.'

*Andy Mullahy, Qualifications Support Officer,
Nottingham City Council.*

Good practice

QCA recommends that a consortium management member with special responsibility for exams office operations, should:

- establish contact with the team of exams officers and with the local QCA centre support officer
- provide the exams officers group with information and insight about operational decisions that could affect assessment administration
- represent the needs of the consortium exams officers group at consortium management meetings
- discuss administrative resources planning with the exams officers group, for example data-sharing requirements might mean that management information systems need to be standardised across the consortium
- help exams officers work together by enabling them to meet regularly to plan and deal with common issues in assessment administration, and if you are able, attend these meetings
- use the consortium delivery plan to:
 - explain the principles behind the consortium and the structures it will work to, for example how teaching is timetabled and where it will be carried out
 - help the exams officers group understand the consortium management structure and how decisions are made
- explain any consortium policies that affect assessment administration (for example, who will pay for what assessment entry fees)
- encourage the adoption of a consortium-wide policy on sharing learner details between centres in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.



9. Professional development for exams officers

Because of the vital part exams officers play in Diploma delivery, the exams officer role is becoming more sophisticated, requiring considerable organisational expertise, up-to-the-minute knowledge of qualifications, and involving more responsibility for operational efficiency of assessment administration.



A successful exams officer working in a Diploma consortium motivates staff to achieve common goals and manages complex data and processes. These are skills that organisations value and may lead to opportunities for career progression. If you want to take these opportunities, consider acquiring new skills or formal recognition through the achievement of professional qualifications, for the work you do.

Raising your profile

Being involved early in preparation, you will develop first rate knowledge of the Diploma – knowledge that could make a difference to management decisions about issues such as how exam timetabling should be aligned with entry deadlines.

Working with the Diploma could lead to opportunities to increase your profile in your centre or consortium. You could do this by sharing information, or providing advice or guidance to management and other colleagues on the new specifications and qualifications, and on operational issues arising from their assessment.

You may also be able to raise your profile through working with learners' advisers. Under new arrangements, every learner will have an adviser or mentor to help manage his or her course of study. Because the adviser will wish to track the learner's progress and help the learner make decisions on making certification claims or re-sits if required, they are likely to want to tap into your knowledge.

Good practice

Play your part in the delivery of information, advice and guidance to learners in your consortium through meaningful contact on Diploma matters with teaching staff and senior leaders.

Set up your own process for notifying and advising a learner's adviser on progress (tracked through the aggregation service) and any information regarding re-sits and entry deadlines if required.

Use your Diploma knowledge to raise your profile within your centre (and consortium).

A Diploma exams officer role description is available at www.qca.org.uk/diplomaresources. Use it to inform a discussion of your developing role with your line manager.

Make the most of your extra responsibilities and status by ensuring you are credited for the use of your Diploma expertise in your centre and consortium. Record your contributions in your annual review of exams management, using QCA's online exam review generator tool. See www.qca.org.uk/erg

Use QCA's self-assessment tool, *Professional development through Diploma administration*, to identify how your increasing knowledge and expertise could develop your career. See www.qca.org.uk/diplomaresources

If you are a member of the Examination Officers' Association, use their online competency framework tool to help assess what level of professional qualifications you may wish to undertake for your further development. These professional qualifications make reference to newly reformed qualifications, including the Diploma, and will reinforce your status and role as an expert in your centre. See www.examofficers.org.uk for details.

Professional development – a case study



Helen Pearcey

When the Furness 14–19 Partnership decided that the best way of coordinating planning for Diploma administration was to appoint a lead exams officer (EO),

Helen Pearcey decided to apply for the post. She has now been the lead EO for over a year and explains her role.

'A lead EO should be prepared to take a lead role and be the central point of contact between the consortium management group and the other EOs involved. That means I attend lots of meetings – with leads for Diplomas, consortium management group etc. Even if the agenda doesn't seem applicable to EOs, the information from these meetings can be relevant, and I ensure any information is provided to our central Diploma administrator in a standard format.

'I ask the EOs to provide me with information by supplying them with a pro forma spreadsheet and collating before sending off to the administrator.

'I set shared deadline dates for EOs to ensure everyone carries out the processes required in time for the deadline set by the exam board.

'I made sure I carried out the procedures for finding ULNs, registering pupils at my school for their Diploma and registering them with the exam board for principal learning. I could then attend our EO meeting a few days later and reassure everyone it could be done and relay any problems which I incurred during the process. During the process, I visited two of our EOs to assist them.'

10. Support available from QCA



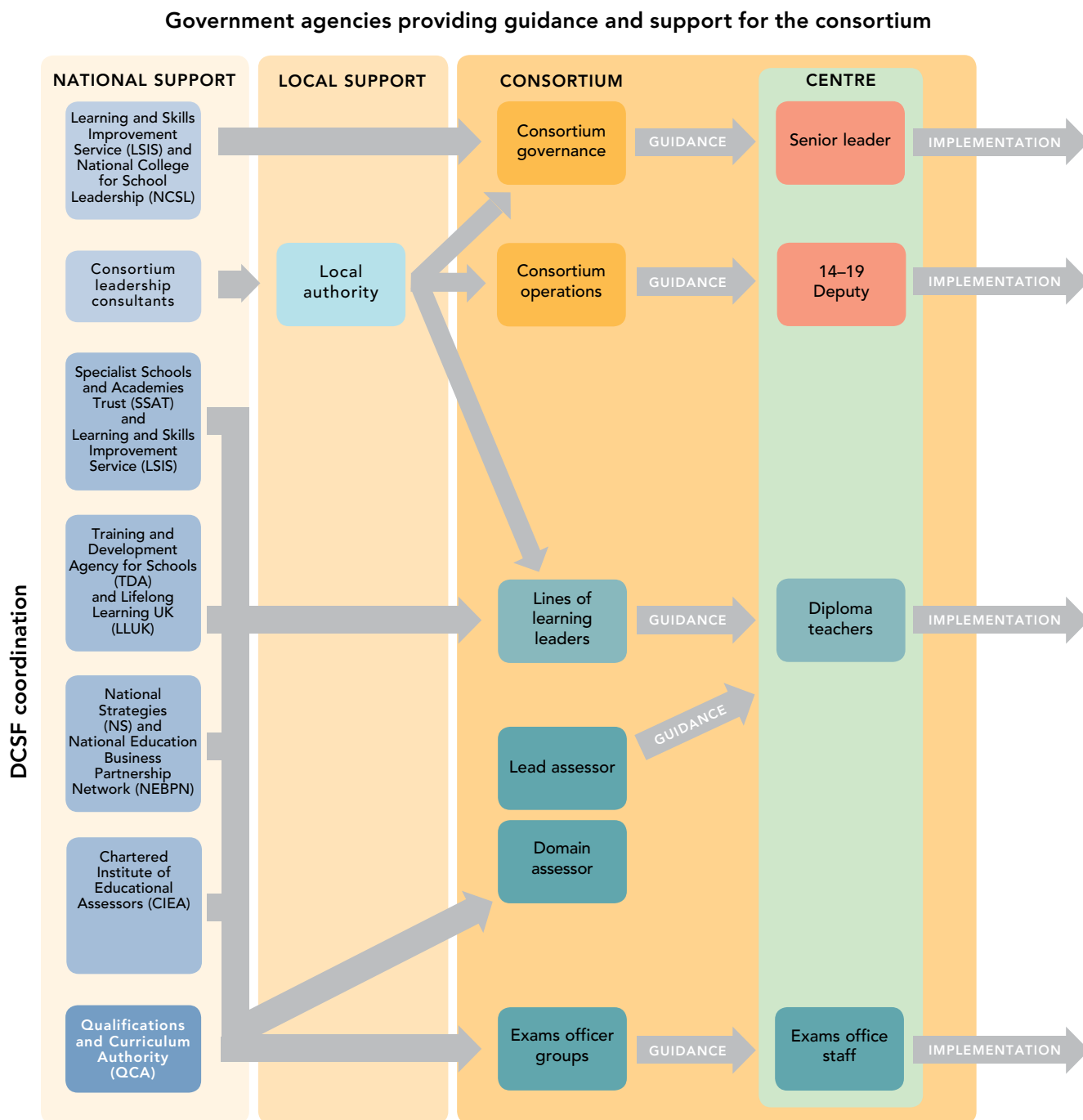
QCA will continue to support exams officers throughout the Diploma implementation and beyond with:

- printed visual aids and guidance
 - ongoing assistance and advice from QCA's centre support officers – to find your centre support officer, see www.qca.org.uk/cso
 - the XO newsletter, published by QCA once each term and packed with news, updates and relevant case studies
 - monthly email updates on the latest developments – to subscribe, go to www.qca.org.uk/xo
 - training and guidance for exams officers on using the *Diploma aggregation service* and *Learner registration service* scheduled during 2009.
- There is also a number of online tools available to help manage the Diploma workload, including:
- the *Consortium centre planner* to help plan the management of principal learning and other Diploma component qualifications
 - the *Consortium Responsibilities chart* to record and monitor tasks and responsibilities against agreed deadlines
 - *Professional development through Diploma administration* self-assessment tool to identify opportunities for personal and professional development for exams officers
 - the *Consortium exam policy generator* to deliver a customised consortium exam policy by completing an online template
 - the *Individual learning plan* to record the qualifications and other achievements a learner is following for their Diploma, which helps monitor progress
 - the *Diploma ready reckoner* to help centre staff understand the importance of guided learning hours and additional and specialist learning for aggregation.

- the *Consortium health check* is an analysis tool which helps an exams officers group to identify any aspects of collaborative working that are preventing the group achieving its goals. The tool prompts discussion that will help the group agree solutions to any issues raised.

To access these tools, go to
www.qca.org.uk/diplomaresources.

As always, QCA welcomes feedback from exams officers on Diploma experiences. We aim to provide examples that showcase administrative good practice for the benefit of all exams officers, so please contact us at casestudies@qca.org.uk if your consortium has successfully overcome a challenge that other consortia's exams officers may experience as they get ready for the Diploma.



Appendix A

Understanding the Diploma: How it is structured, managed and aggregated.

Here, the principles of how Diplomas are constructed and managed are explained by analysing the make-up of a typical Diploma qualification – in this case the Higher Diploma in creative and media.

Note: pre-16 learners working at level 2 will be studying their Diploma alongside other core studies at key stage 4. See the Diploma catalogues (www.ndaq.org.uk) for more information about the awarding bodies involved.

Higher Diploma in creative and media – a case study

To gain a Diploma, the learner will be expected to achieve a number of components:

Principal learning (available from AQA – City & Guilds, Edexcel, or OCR)

+

Functional skills English + functional skills mathematics + functional skills ICT (each available from up to 11 different awarding bodies)

+

Project (or level 3 extended project for some learners) (available from AQA, Edexcel, EDI, OCR, VTCT or WJEC)

+

Additional and specialist learning qualifications, equivalent to at least 180 guided learning hours, (available from a wide range of component awarding bodies)

+

Work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills, which are verified by the centre and do not involve an awarding body

The exams officer will be responsible for the transactions around the consortium, with learners and with awarding bodies, to administer all of these units and qualifications. The Diploma aggregation service will ensure that results are collated at qualification level on behalf of the learner and will verify that valid combinations have been achieved. It is the responsibility of curriculum planners and learners' advisers (not exams officers) to ensure that the learning plan selected will result in a valid Diploma award. However, it is good practice for exams officers to double-check that a valid combination is being taught.

QCA has produced a simple tool that shows how components of the Diploma fit together.

The *Diploma ready reckoner* helps exams officers and managers to understand easily the importance of guided learning hours (GLH) and additional and specialist learning (ASL) to successful Diploma aggregation. It gives a breakdown of the amount of guided learning hours required for each component of the Diploma at each level of learning. The *Diploma ready reckoner* is available at www.qca.org.uk/diplomaresources.

INPUT DATA FOR ADDITIONAL AND SPECIALIST LEARNING (QUALIFICATIONS)

3 Mandatory components		Foundation Diploma level 1	Higher Diploma level 2	Progression Diploma level 3	Advanced Diploma level 3
1. Principal learning	Number of units dependent on awarding body selected	GUIDED LEARNING HOURS (GLH)			
		240	420	540	540
2. Generic learning units	Functional skills maths, English, ICT	120	80	Must have completed at L2	Must have completed at L2
	Project	60	60	N/A	N/A
	Extended project	N/A	N/A	120	120
	PLTS (completion tick box in DAS)	60	60	60	60
	10 days' work experience completion (tick box in DAS)	Required	Required	Required	Required
3. Additional and specialist learning	Enter GLH for each ASL unit below Go to Diploma catalogue	Level 1 120 GLH*	Level 2 180 GLH*	ASL not required for progression Diploma	Level 3 360 GLH*
	Eligible ASL unit	0	0	N/A	0
	Eligible ASL unit	0	0	N/A	0
	Eligible ASL unit	0	0	N/A	0
	Eligible ASL unit	0	0	N/A	0
Your total		480	620	720	720
Total GLH required for Diploma award		600	800	720	1080
Are we on track?		No	No	Yes	No

* These are the minimum GLH that learners must complete for their ASL.

- A number of qualifications with fewer GLH than the minimum required for their ASL. However, the combined GLH must meet the minimum required.
- A qualification with GLH that are equal to the minimum required.
- A single qualification with more GLH than the minimum required. The GLH can be up to 50% more than the minimum required.
- 10 days' work experience is required for the Diploma award but does not contribute to GLH.

Principal learning

The level 2 creative and media principal learning qualification is made up of seven units – irrespective of which awarding body's specification is selected. The specifications (with their qualification and unit entry codes) from the three awarding bodies are as follows.

AQA/City & Guilds specification
(Qualification ref. 500/2391/3)
specification code 7311, registration
code 7322R, aggregation code 7822

- CAM2U1 Exploring creativity
- CAM2U2 Creating inspiration
- CAM2U3 Creating possibilities
- CAM2U4 Discovering creative potential
- CAM2U5 Developing a creative response
- CAM2U6 Creative teamwork
- CAM2U7 Promotion and review

OCR specification
(Qualification ref. 500/2382/2)
aggregation code H807

- F476 Exploring the creative and media world
- F477 Promoting products, performances and ideas
- F478 Individual realisation – who I am and who am I?
- F479 Responding to a brief
- F480 Exploring group performance skills
- F481 Exploring digital technologies
- F482 Creative and media skills in the context of the wider community

Edexcel specification
(Qualification ref. 500/2374/3)
registration code 2CM07,
aggregation code ZCM20

- CM201 Scene
- CM202 Performance
- CM203 Artefact
- CM204 Record
- CM205 Campaign
- CM206 Festival
- CM207 Project report



Teaching and assessment of principal learning

All assessment units and the overall principal learning qualification are graded. For the Higher Diploma example here, the scale used is A*, A, B or C.

In the example on page 44, six of the seven units are internally assessed – in other words, teachers within the consortium will set, supervise and mark the work and there will be a moderation process organised by the awarding body, in cooperation with the consortium's lead and domain assessors. One unit will involve an assessment set by the awarding body and marked by an external examiner.

Distinguishing between units that are internally assessed and those that involve exam papers is important to exams officers in agreeing roles and responsibilities. See section 6. Getting ready: Agreement.

Teaching of the seven principal learning units may be delivered by more than one centre. However, the assessment of each individual unit should be managed by only one assessment centre.

Functional skills

Within all level 2 Diplomas, functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT will typically involve one assessed unit, although this unit may involve more than one assessment component for each subject. There will not be any grading, simply a pass/fail assessment.

Project

For the Higher Diploma most learners will complete a Higher project, although achievement of a level 3 extended project would be accepted in its place.

The project topic must either complement and develop the themes covered in the principal learning or provide progression towards the learner's aspirations for further or higher education, training or later employment.

Projects are set and marked by teachers within the consortium against defined criteria detailed in the qualification specification and the Diploma catalogue. In each case there is a single unit entry code, for example 'F/501/0577 – The Project' for EDI.

The project is graded on a scale of A*, A, B or C. This grade combines with a grade for principal learning, to produce the overall grade for the Diploma. Each project will have a title that will be determined locally by the candidate, teacher or consortium, and not by the awarding body.

For information on the project's units and codes, see the Diploma catalogues at www.ndaq.org.uk and refer to awarding body administration documents.

Additional and specialist learning

For the Higher Diploma, learners are expected to complete a minimum of 180 GLHs of additional and specialist learning. Additional and specialist learning allows learners to broaden and specialise their studies.

Some learners will opt to include GCSEs as additional learning: each GCSE typically accounts for 120 GLHs. Some qualifications gained prior to a learner starting their Diploma studies (since January 2005) could be credited towards the Diploma qualification, provided that the Diploma catalogue identifies it as a valid qualification, for the learner's chosen line of learning and level.

As with other qualifications, additional and specialist learning qualifications may involve internal assessments and/or external exams.

There are specific rules of combination in the Diploma catalogues that define which additional and specialist learning qualifications make valid contributions and which do not. For example, if a learner achieves two GCSEs in the same or similar subjects, only one will count towards a Diploma. The barring rules are shown in the Diploma catalogue. Some additional and specialist learning qualifications (such as GCSEs) are graded and others are awarded as a pass. All additional and specialist learning will contribute to a Diploma being achieved but not to the Diploma's overall grade.

Work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills

To achieve a Diploma, candidates must complete at least 10 days' work experience and must achieve their personal, learning and thinking skills.

Centre staff record work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills in learner accounts. This is a single record for each candidate in the *Diploma aggregation service*. Exams officers will need to know who in their consortium is authorised to validate these achievements.

Overall grading and award

To achieve the overall Diploma, a learner must complete his or her principal learning and generic learning components successfully, and fulfil minimum requirements for any additional and specialist learning qualifications. The overall grade of the Higher Diploma (A*, A, B, C or U) is determined by the grades achieved in principal learning and in the project. The grades awarded for principal learning and the project are converted by the chosen Diploma awarding body into point values. The point values for the project and principal learning are then combined and converted into an overall Diploma grade.

The Diploma is then awarded by the Diploma awarding body. The Diploma awarding body is chosen locally, ideally when learners start their course of study. The choice of component awarding bodies for any of the constituent components does not affect the choice of Diploma awarding body.

Although transactions with component awarding bodies for each individual qualification for the Diploma are carried out by exams officers directly, the awarding bodies will send results directly to the *Diploma aggregation service* (as well as to the centre concerned).

Summary

The table below shows a valid combination of results. The *Diploma aggregation service*, by automatically applying rules of combination, will determine whether this is a valid combination. The exams officer therefore does not need to do this. However, curriculum planners and learners' advisers should ensure that components of study selected by the learner will result in a valid Diploma award, and this can be checked by the exams officer to provide further reassurance.



Typical valid combination			
Achievement	Description	Awarding body	Qualification reference
Principal learning	Level 2 principal learning in creative and media	AQA/City & Guilds	500/2391/3
Functional skills	Level 2 award in functional skills English	Edexcel	500/2785/2
Functional skills	Level 2 award in functional skills mathematics	Edexcel	500/2783/9
Functional skills	Level 2 award in functional skills ICT	OCR	500/2564/8
Project	Level 2 project	EDI	500/2386/X
ASL	GCSE in Spanish	OCR	100/1300/3
ASL	Intermediate vocational graded examination in dance	RAD	100/1340/4
Work experience	At least 10 days – affirmed by the centre	N/A	N/A
PLTS	The six personal, learning and thinking skills – affirmed by the centre	N/A	N/A

Appendix B

Understanding the Diploma: Achievement and attainment table (AAT) points, UCAS points and grading.

	Equivalent volume and challenge	Structure	GLHs	Max AAT	Max UCAS	Grading
FOUNDATION DIPLOMA	5 GCSEs at level 1 (eg 5 GCSE grades D–G)	Principal learning	240	102	n/a	A*–B (U = Unclassified)
		Generic learning:				
		- project	60	17	n/a	
		- functional skills	120	n/a	n/a	
		- personal, learning and thinking skills	60	n/a	n/a	
		Additional and specialist learning	120	34	n/a	
		Total	600	153	n/a	
HIGHER DIPLOMA	7 GCSEs at level 2 (eg 7 GCSE grades A*–C)	Principal learning	420	290	n/a	A*–C (U = Unclassified)
		Generic learning:				
		- project	60	29	n/a	
		- functional skills	80	n/a	n/a	
		- personal, learning and thinking skills	60	n/a	n/a	
		Additional and specialist learning	180	116	n/a	
		Total	800	435	n/a	
ADVANCED DIPLOMA	3.5 A levels (eg 3.5 A levels grades A*–E)	Principal learning	540	450		A*–E (U = Unclassified)
		Generic learning:				
		- extended project	120	90		
		- personal, learning and thinking skills	60	60		
		- work experience*	90*	63		
		- functional skills*	135*	69		
		Additional and specialist learning	360	300		
		Total	1080 (1305*)	1032	420	
PROGRESSION DIPLOMA	2.5 A levels (eg 3.5 A levels grades A*–E)	Principal learning	540	450		A*–E (U = Unclassified)
		Generic learning:				
		- extended project	120	90		
		- personal, learning and thinking skills	60	60		
		- work experience*	90*	63		
		- functional skills*	135*	69		
		Total	720 (945*)	732	300	

Even if a learner does not complete their Diploma, they can still gain AAT points for any constituent qualification they have completed. The values for GLHs given here for additional and specialist learning represent the minimum necessary to meet requirements for the Diploma. The corresponding AAT values are for guidance only, as these will vary depending on the qualification choices learners make for their additional and specialist learning. Variations in the AAT values for additional and specialist learning will also affect the overall Diploma AAT values.

* At level 3, the curriculum outside of teaching for the Diploma does not include provision for the delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS), functional skills or work-related learning. Achievement of all of these are, however, required for the achievement of the Advanced and Progression Diplomas.

Because of this, in the early years following the introduction of the Diploma, functional skills will need to be taught. Work experience will also require a significant amount of directed time. Therefore functional skills, work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills are included within the AAT points calculations.

This means that although the published 1080 GLHs for the Advanced Diploma is still valid, the AAT points for the qualification are based on 1305 GLHs, taking into account functional skills and work experience.

Appendix C

Understanding the Diploma: Exams office agreement.

As discussed in section 6, the exams office agreement is a vital tool for exams officers as it clearly allocates responsibility for each of the core tasks in Diploma administration to either the home centre or the assessment centre.

Below is a template exams office agreement which has been refined based on the experiences of exams officers and consortia that have already introduced Diplomas. It sets out core tasks that will apply in the overwhelming proportion of cases, especially where learners from one institution go to a single other institution to be taught and assessed. It is also easy to adapt for other models of delivery.

This agreement is just an overview. More details on how to complete each task can be found in *Administering the Diploma* essential guide, which you will receive later in the year.

The exams office agreement – template

Starting out

Using the *Consortium centre planner tool*, the exams team will identify where each centre acts as a home centre and where it acts as an assessment centre.

The tasks then divide as follows.

Task	Home centre	Assessment centre
Sign up to the Learner registration service (LRS)	✓	
Sign up to the Diploma aggregation service (DAS)	✓	
Decide who will have access to DAS and create user accounts	✓	
Acquire accurate lists of learners by line of learning and level	✓	
Acquire unique learner numbers for these learners	✓	
Open learner accounts for these learners	✓	
Provide a secure list of learners by line of learning and level to the assessment centre(s)		✓
Undertake any centre approvals required by awarding bodies. (Your consortium may have a policy concerning centre approvals)		✓
Find out qualification details, eg awarding body, specifications, units, likely assessment dates		✓
Provide a clear assessment plan based on the above to all home centres		✓

Next steps

Early in the autumn term, once learner details are stable the following tasks should be carried out.

Task	Home centre	Assessment centre	Notes
Obtain a learning plan for each individual or cohort, which determines the planned combination of qualifications. Your consortium policy should specify responsibilities for this	✓	✓	Your consortium policy should specify responsibilities for this
Manage process to capture learners' prior achievement and seek acknowledgement from awarding bodies	✓		
Apply for access arrangements	✓		
Inform assessment centres of approved access arrangements	✓		
Register learners for principal learning – if required by the awarding body for this qualification	✓		
Register each learner's Diploma with a Diploma awarding body (via DAS)	✓		
Determine whether to set the intention to claim (ITC) in DAS. Your centre should have a policy concerning ITC	✓		

Dealing with exams and other assessments

Much of the Diploma is assessed internally. For example, internal assessment within principal learning is typically organised by the domain assessor for the line of learning and marked by assessors appointed within the consortium.

However, principal learning will always include at least one externally marked exam, where the awarding body takes direct responsibility for marking. These may be

timetabled (for example, alongside GCSEs) or may be offered 'on demand'. Identifying which assessment falls into which category is part of the assessment plan referred to in Starting out on page 50.

Other qualifications, such as the project, additional and specialist learning or functional skills, could also be delivered across centres.

The agreement below applies to any of these exams and assessments that are delivered across centres.

Task	Home centre	Assessment centre	Notes
Make entries for timetabled, externally marked exams	✓	✓	This is best carried out by home centres as the home centre can then provide each learner with a single exams timetable and deal more effectively with clashes. The learner will also not need to travel to take their exam.
Arrange logistics for timetabled, externally marked exams, eg learner timetables, accommodation, invigilation, clashes, papers and scripts etc	✓		
Make entries for on-demand, externally marked exams		✓	If on-demand exams can be taken within the teaching timetable then only the assessment centre need create the exam conditions – instead of numerous home centres.
Arrange logistics for on-demand, externally marked exams, eg learner timetables, accommodation, invigilation, papers and scripts etc		✓	
Make entries for internally assessed units		✓	This will ensure that awarding bodies can apply their moderation or verification processes consistently across the cohort.
Manage administration for internally assessed units – pre-release material, mark sheets, internal moderation, sampling, external moderation	✓	✓	Information will be sent by the component awarding body to the centre that made the assessment entries.
Provide approved access arrangements (such as reader, scribe, word processor or practical assistant)	✓		In most cases, the learner will be more relaxed with a person familiar to them from their home centre.
Make claims for special consideration	✓	✓	Where the reasons are specific to the learner – such as illness or bereavement – the home centre is usually best placed. Where the incident is specific to the cohort – such as an incident in the room – the assessment centre is usually best placed. The awarding body may wish to deal directly with whichever centre made the entry.

Results and progress monitoring

Learners' results will be communicated by awarding bodies and should also be accumulating in the learner accounts held by the *Diploma aggregation service*. Both centres will have a legitimate interest in their results since they reflect the effort of both learners and teachers.

Task	Home centre	Assessment centre	Notes
Monitor learner accounts for result updates and communicate with learners and their advisers. Compare with individual or cohort learning plans	✓		
Advise other centres about results as they are received from component awarding bodies	✓	✓	The home centre will communicate results for externally-marked assessments to the delivery or teaching centre. The assessment centre will communicate results for internal assessment to the home centre.
Manage enquiries about results	✓	✓	Awarding bodies will want to deal with the centre that made the entry.

Finances

Financial arrangements between centres will be the subject of consortium policy. One significant part of this concerns awarding body fees. In most cases, these fees will go to the home centre. However, there may be some circumstances where awarding body invoices will go to the assessment centre making the entries. Therefore reconciling invoices will involve both centres.

Task	Home centre	Assessment centre
Reconcile awarding body fees and invoices	✓	✓

What we've learned



'The money for entry fees is being sent by the local authority to the two lead schools (east and west of the city) in the consortium group, who will make entries for centre-assessed units. Entries for externally assessed units will be made by home centres.'

Tim Hatchett, Hull 14-19 Partnership.

Completing the course requirements

In addition to results of qualifications, learners must show evidence of the six personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) and the completion of 10 days' work experience. Once everything is in place, a centre can claim a Diploma on behalf of a learner. Consortia will normally have policies in place about which centre confirms that work experience and PLTS have been achieved.

Task	Home centre	Assessment centre
Confirm work experience and update DAS	✓	✓
Confirm PLTS and update DAS	✓	✓
Use DAS to claim the Diploma from the Diploma awarding body in line with the centre's policy	✓	

What we've learned



'In our consortium, the home centre will have full responsibility for the recording achievement of work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills, including transferring this onto the student's learner account using the *Diploma aggregation* service. In my role as lead exams officer, I will also be doing a check to make sure that each centre has done this correctly'.

Anne-Marie Kinsella-Calverley, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley Consortium.

Appendix D

Glossary

Additional and specialist learning

Qualifications that learners choose to include in their Diploma which are complementary to their line of learning or specialised in character. Additional and specialist learning must provide high-quality breadth and/or depth of curriculum experience, without duplication of principal learning.

Advanced Diploma

The Diploma qualification at level 3, including additional and specialist learning.

Aggregation

The adding together of attainment across the components and units of a qualification to confirm whether the Diploma is achieved and at what grade. Aggregation may require a weighting of the different elements to determine how much each element can contribute to the whole qualification.

Applied learning

Acquiring and applying knowledge, skills and understanding through tasks set in sector or subject contexts that have many of the characteristics of real work or are set within the workplace. Most importantly, the purpose of the task in which learners apply their knowledge, skills and understanding must be relevant to the workplace.

Assessment centre

Any centre in a consortium hosting an internal or external assessment for Diploma learners.

Barring code

A code used in the Diploma catalogues to enable qualifications to be compared and to identify qualifications that may not be combined in a learner's study plan because of overlapping content.

Centre support officers

QCA staff who are experts in Diploma administration. Your first port of call for anything you have missed on the route to success, they will guide you to the right support products and services. Find out your local centre support officer at www.qca.org.uk/cso.

Certificate

The record of attainment in a unit or qualification issued by the awarding body.

Cluster

A subset of centres in a consortium, grouped for administrative reasons. The basis for membership of a cluster could be determined by line of learning or geographic location. Not all consortia will have clusters.

Component

Diplomas are made up of constituent qualifications that are organised in terms of the following three components:

- principal learning
- generic learning
- additional and specialist learning.

Component awarding body (CAB)

An awarding body offering any of the constituent qualifications for the Diploma, which may include principal learning, functional skills, foundation, higher and extended project and/or additional and specialist learning.

Consortium

A group of centres and other organisations (including employers and training providers) working together locally to offer a Diploma line of learning. Sometimes also known as a partnership. Each consortium is approved through the DCSF Diploma Gateway process.

Consortium centre planner

A useful tool from QCA for exams officers to record information about their consortium and arrangements for planning Diploma assessment administration between centres.

Consortium exam policy generator

A tool produced by QCA that helps consortium managers and exams officers to collaborate on developing consortium-wide policies which affect Diploma assessment administration.

Consortium health check tool

A self-analysis questionnaire provided by QCA to help improve working relationships within a consortium group. Consult your QCA centre support officer if you require more information or facilitation.

Consortium operational meetings

Meetings of exams officers in a consortium, sometimes facilitated by a centre support officer.

Consortium responsibilities chart

A management tool provided by QCA that assists in the management and allocation of tasks among consortium groups of exams officers by providing a template for clarifying responsibilities, accountability, and who should be consulted and who needs to be kept informed for each task.

Constituent qualifications

Accredited qualifications that make up the different components of the Diploma.

Controlled assessment

Controlled assessment is the approach to internal assessment where an awarding body sets requirements or 'controls' for:

- setting tasks
- taking tasks
- marking tasks.

A learner's marks for each internally assessed unit of principal learning qualifications must be drawn from an assessment that has been set, taken and marked in line with these controls. The specific requirements for each principal learning qualification and further guidance on how to implement controls will be provided by component awarding bodies.

Data Protection Act 1998

Law relating to the security of personal information about an individual. This Act affects how centres are able to store and communicate personal information about staff and learners.

Delivery centres

The centres that deliver teaching to learners. They are normally centres that have special facilities or particular expertise to teach a line of learning. They may also be a learner's home centre and/or an assessment centre.

Diploma aggregation service

A service that supports the awarding of Diplomas to learners. It is used by exam centres and awarding bodies to share data and record learners' progress towards a Diploma award. Users at exam centres access the service through a web browser. As well as recording Diploma constituent qualification results for each learner, the service aggregates these results and determines whether sufficient achievements have been gained for a Diploma to be claimed through the service.

Diploma awarding body (DAB)

An awarding body that awards the overall Diploma qualification, issuing a transcript and certificate.

Diploma catalogues

The catalogues of the constituent qualifications, and the valid combinations of those qualifications, which can be used for the Diploma. These catalogues form part of the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ), which can be browsed at www.ndaq.org.uk.

Diploma ready reckoner

The *Diploma ready reckoner* helps exams officers and managers to understand easily the importance of guided learning hours and additional and specialist learning to successful Diploma aggregation. It gives a breakdown of the amount of guided learning hours required for each component of the Diploma at each level of learning.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Law outlining requirements for organisations regarding equality of opportunity for people with disabilities. Centres must comply with the Act to ensure fair access to education and qualifications achievement. QCA provides advice and guidance on the Act and how it affects the exams office at www.qca.org.uk/dda.

Domain assessor

A person who has responsibility within a consortium for overseeing all aspects of the quality assurance of the internal assessment carried out on the principal learning and project qualifications for a particular Diploma line of learning.

Examination Officers' Association (EOA)

The professional body for exams office personnel, supporting professional development and providing national representation for its members.

Extended Diploma

The Extended Diploma will stretch and challenge the most capable learners at all Diploma levels. Recognising a wider range of achievement – including key stage 4 achievement – the extended Diplomas will feature an extended core of English and mathematics content at Foundation and Higher levels. At Advanced level, there will be an extended core of either English, mathematics or ICT. All levels will also include an extended minimum requirement of additional and specialist learning. Work has begun to determine the shape of the extended Diploma, which will be developed across all 17 lines of learning for first teaching in 2011.

Extended project

A level 3 qualification involving a single piece of work that requires a high degree of planning, preparation, research and independent working. Learners explore in depth a topic based on their own interests and aspirations. The extended project may be completed as a stand-alone qualification or as part of an Advanced or Progression Diploma.

External assessment

A form of assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are set by the awarding body, taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marked by the awarding body.

Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB)

The organisation that represents awarding bodies which offer vocational qualifications in the UK. FAB's activities focus on achieving a vocational qualification system that meets the differing needs of candidates, employers, education and training providers and awarding bodies.

Foundation Diploma

The Diploma qualification at level 1.

Foundation project

A level 1 qualification involving a single piece of work that requires a high degree of planning, preparation, research and independent working. Learners explore in depth a topic based on their own interests and aspirations. The foundation project is completed as part of a Foundation Diploma.

Functional skills

These are the core elements of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), which provide the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work. Functional skills will relate to GCSEs in English, mathematics and ICT, Diplomas and apprenticeships. They will also be available as stand-alone qualifications.

Gateway

The quality assurance process run by the DCSF, through which a local partnership of learning providers (a consortium) applies for approval to offer Diploma qualifications in a line of learning.

Generic learning

Generic learning enables students to develop and apply the skills and knowledge necessary for learning, employment and personal development. Across all Diplomas, generic learning consists of:

- functional skills
- personal, learning and thinking skills
- a project
- work experience.

Grade

A point on a scale of performance used to differentiate achievement within a qualification. Each different level of Diploma has a different grading scale:

- Foundation – A*/A/B or U (unclassified)
- Higher – A*/A/B/C or U (unclassified)
- Advanced/Progression – A*/A/B/C/D/E or U (unclassified).

Only the grades for principal learning and project qualifications contribute to the grade of the overall Diploma. When grading a Diploma, the Diploma awarding body converts grades for principal learning and the project into points. These points are added, then the total is converted into an overall Diploma grade according to published thresholds. More

information is available in the document *Arrangements for awarding and setting standards in the Diploma – Principal learning, project and Diploma – Final report of the Diploma Awarding and Standards Group*, from www.ofqual.gov.uk/1956.aspx

Guided learning hours (GLH)

The number of hours of supervised study time required to teach a qualification.

Higher Diploma

The Diploma qualification at level 2.

Higher project

A level 2 qualification involving a single piece of work that requires a high degree of planning, preparation, research and independent working. Learners explore in depth a topic based on their own interests and aspirations. The higher project is completed as part of a Higher Diploma.

Home centre

The centre where a learner is enrolled or registered. This centre will have overall responsibility for the learner's Diploma and maintenance of his or her learner account.

Individual learning plan

Collected information on the constituent qualifications selected by a learner to make up his or her Diploma. QCA provides a template for recording this information, available at www.qca.org.uk/diplomaresources.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG)

People need IAG to make informed choices about local learning and work opportunities. Information is the data about how to access learning and work opportunities. Advice is the additional support given to understand the information. Guidance offers even more in-depth help from a trained adviser.

Intention to claim

A mechanism by which a user of the *Diploma aggregation service* can state a learner's intention to claim a Diploma automatically upon receiving the results for the final constituent qualification of his or her Diploma.

Internal assessment

Assessment tasks where learners' evidence is assessed in the centre against criteria provided by the awarding body and subjected to external moderation. The assessment tasks may be set internally at the centre or be provided by the awarding body.

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)

Represents the awarding bodies that offer general qualifications, for example GCSEs and A levels. JCQ ensures that learners of all ages and levels of ability have access to qualifications and is responsible for producing administration rules for general qualifications, for example regulations on access arrangements.

Lead assessor

A person who has responsibility within a consortium for overseeing all aspects of the quality assurance of the assessment carried out for the principal learning and project components for all Diploma programmes offered.

Learner account

The Learner account will indicate participation on a Diploma programme and act as the repository in the *Diploma aggregation service* for results data for an individual learner, recording line of learning and level. It will be managed and monitored by a centre on behalf of a learner. Learners will not have direct access to their learner accounts.

Learner registration service (LRS)

An internet-based service capable of providing a unique learner number (ULN) for every person in education and training in the UK. This will allow people to build a lifelong record of their learning participation and achievements. It is part of the Managing Information Across Partners programme of work. Further information can be found at www.miap.gov.uk/services.

Line of learning

The broad subject or sector area referenced in the title of a Diploma qualification.

Local administrator

A user role of the *Diploma aggregation service*. The role enables the user to maintain information on the Diploma aggregation service about the centre and allocate further user roles to staff in their centre.

Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP)

The MIAP programme streamlines the collection, handling and sharing of information on learning and achievement for education and training organisations. The Learning and Skills Council is delivering MIAP on behalf of partners across the education sector. Further information can be found at www.miap.gov.uk.

MIAP helpdesk

A telephone and email help service to support centre-based users of the *Learner registration service*. Telephone: 0845 602 2589.

National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ)

A website that contains details of all qualifications that are accredited by the qualification regulators in England (Ofqual), Wales (DCELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA). More information can be found on NDAQ at www.ndaq.org.uk.

Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual)

The qualifications regulator of exams and tests in England. Ofqual safeguards the integrity of the qualifications system through the monitoring of awarding body performance, accessibility of qualifications and the quality of marking.

Partnership

See consortium.

Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)

A requirement of the Diploma, as part of generic learning. This framework of skills equips young people for successful employment and lifelong learning. PLTS require learners to be:

- independent enquirers
- creative thinkers
- reflective learners
- team workers
- self-managers
- effective participators.

Principal learning

This is a mandatory learning part of the Diploma. Principal learning is sector and subject related. It includes a minimum of 50 per cent applied learning and consists of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that support progress through the line of learning into the sectors and subjects concerned.

Prior achievement

The Diploma qualification allows for the inclusion of constituent qualifications that have been achieved by a learner after 1 January 2005, if they are in the Diploma catalogue for that line of learning and level or a historic version of the Diploma catalogue. Prior achievement also refers to qualifications that are relevant to the Diploma achieved prior to the opening of a learner account.

Prior achievement form

A form that centres complete and send to a component awarding body to request that qualifications a learner achieved prior to a learner account being opened be recorded in his or her learner account.

Professional development through Diploma administration

Self-assessment tool provided by QCA for exams officers who wish to exploit skills and career development opportunities presented from managing the administration of 14–19 qualifications.

Progression Diploma

The Diploma qualification at level 3, which does not include any additional and specialist learning.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

Responsible, with partner organisations, for developing qualifications, including the Diploma.

Super user

A user role of the *Learner registration service*. This role enables the user to obtain unique learner numbers from the service, update learner details held by the service and nominate other centre-based users of the service.

Training needs analysis tool

A self-assessment tool provided by QCA for exams officers to assess themselves for Diploma management and administration readiness. It is available at www.qca.org.uk/tna.

Unique learner number (ULN)

The unique number that identifies a learner, provided and supported by Managing Information Across Partners and the *Learner registration service*.

Work-based learning provider

A work place offering work experience and/or qualifications to Diploma learners as an institutional member of a consortium.

Work experience

A placement with an employer in which a young person carries out a task or range of tasks and duties in much the same way as an employee, with the emphasis on learning from the experience. Work experience provides opportunities for learning about the skills and personal qualities, careers, roles and structures that exist within a workplace or organisation.

Appendix E

Diploma awarding bodies (DABs) and component awarding bodies (CABs) 2009/10.

Name	Type	Telephone	Email	Web
ABC Awards	CAB	0115 854 1616	enquiries@abcawards.co.uk	www.abcawards.co.uk
ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music)	CAB	020 7636 5400	abrsms@abrsms.org	www.abrsms.org
Active IQ	CAB	01480 467650	info@activeiq.org.uk	www.activeiq.co.uk
AMSPAR (Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Managers, Administrators and Receptionists)	CAB	020 7387 6005	info@amspar.co.uk	www.amspar.co.uk
AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance)	CAB and DAB (with City & Guilds)	0870 410 1036	mailbox@aqas.org.uk	www.aqas.org.uk
ASDAN (Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network)	CAB	0117 941 1126	info@asdan.org.uk	www.asdan.org.uk
Association of Accounting Technicians	CAB	0845 863 0800	info@aat.org.uk	www.aat.co.uk
BIIAB (British Institute of Innkeeping)	CAB	01276 684 449	reception@bii.org	www.bii.org
Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)	CAB	02476 851 700	customer.services@cih.org	www.cih.org
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	CAB	020 7928 6006		www.cieh.org
Chartered Insurance Institute	CAB	0208 989 8464	customer.serve@cii.co.uk	www.cii.co.uk/cii.aspx
CIE (Cambridge International Examinations)	CAB	01223 55358	international@cie.org.uk	www.cie.org.uk
City & Guilds	CAB and DAB (with AQA)	020 7294 2468	enquiries@cityandguilds.com	www.cityandguilds.com

Name	Type	Telephone	Email	Web
CSkills – Construction Skills	CAB	0870 4176874	call.centre@cskills.org	www.cskills.org
CYQ Central YMCA Qualifications	CAB	020 7343 1800	info@cyq.org.uk	www.cyq.org.uk/
EAL (EMTA Awards Ltd)	CAB	01923 652 400	customercare@eal.org.uk	www.eal.org.uk
Edexcel Limited	CAB and DAB	08445 760 028	enquiries@edexcel.com	www.edexcel.org.uk
EDI (Education Development International plc)	CAB and DAB	0870 720 2909	enquiries@ediplc.com	www.ediplc.com
Equestrian Qualifications Limited	CAB	0844 848 1666	enquiry@bhs.org.uk	www.bhs.org.uk
Glass Qualifications Authority	CAB	0114 272 0033	info@gqaqualifications.com	www.glassqualificationsauthority.com
IFS School of Finance (IFS)	CAB	01227 818 609	fca@ifslearning.ac.uk	www.ifslearning.ac.uk
IMI (Institute of the Motor Industry)	CAB	01992 511 521	imi@motor.org.uk	www.motor.org.uk
Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD)	CAB	020 7377 1577	pa@istd.org	www.istd.org
Institute of Administrative Management	CAB	0207 091 2600	info@instam.org	www.instam.org
Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)	CAB	01543 266 867	customer@i-l-m.com	www.i-l-m.com
International Association of Book Keepers	CAB	01732 458 080	mail@iab.org.uk	www.iab.org.uk/
ITEC	CAB	020 8994 4141	info@itecworld.co.uk	www.itecworld.co.uk
LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art)	CAB	08448 470 520	exams@lamda.org.uk	www.lamda.org.uk
NCFE	CAB	0191 239 8000	info@ncfe.org.uk	www.ncfe.org.uk
NOCN National Open College Network	CAB	0114 2270500	nocn@nocn.org.uk	www.nocn.org.uk
NPTC (National Proficiency Tests Council)	CAB	02476 857 300	information@nptc.org.uk	www.nptc.org.uk
OCNW (Open College of the North West)	CAB	01524 845 046	ocnw@lancaster.ac.uk	www.ocnw.com
OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations)	CAB and DAB	01223 553998	general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk	www.ocr.org.uk

Name	Type	Telephone	Email	Web
PAA/VQ-SET	CAB	01543 254 223	info@paa-uk.org	www.paa-uk.org
QNUK (Qualifications Network)	CAB	0845 121 8328	info@qualificationsnetwork.co.uk	www.qualificationsnetwork.co.uk
Rock School Ltd (RSL)	CAB and DAB	0845 460 4747	office@rockschool.co.uk	www.rockschool.co.uk
Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)	CAB	020 7326 8000	info@rad.org.uk	www.rad.org.uk
Royal Society for Public Health	CAB	0203 177 1600	info@rsph.org.uk	www.rsph.org.uk
Securities and Investment Institute	CAB	020 7645 0600	clientservices@sii.org.uk	www.sii.org.uk
Signature	CAB	0191 383 1155	durham@signature.org.uk	www.signature.org.uk
Thames Valley University (TVU)	CAB	0800 036 8888	learning.advice@tvu.ac.uk	www.tvu.ac.uk
The Learning Machine (TLM)	CAB	01827 305 940	sales@theingots.org	www.theingots.org
Trinity College London (TCL)	CAB	020 7820 6100	info@trinitycollege.co.uk	www.trinitycollege.co.uk
VTCT (Vocational Training Charitable Trust)	CAB and DAB	02380 684 500	customerservice@vtct.org.uk	www.vtct.org.uk
WJEC (Welsh Joint Education Committee)	CAB	029 2026 5000	exams@wjec.co.uk	www.wjec.co.uk

These awarding body details were correct at time of publication (spring 2009).

Appendix F

Are you ready?: Checklists

PREPARATION – ARE YOU READY?	Yes	Under way	No
Do you understand the Diploma qualification as described in section 1?			
Are you aware of the new administration systems described in section 3?			
Do you know and understand the delivery plan for your consortium?			
Are you a member of a consortium-wide exams officers group?			
Have you contacted the person who will provide learner cohort details?			
Have you contacted the person who will provide information on assessment types, locations and timings?			

AGREEMENT – ARE YOU READY?	Yes	Under way	No
If a member of the consortium management team has been assigned responsibility for exams office operations, have you enlisted their support in agreeing home and assessment centre responsibilities?			
Do you know how you will find out whether work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills have been achieved?			
Have roles and responsibilities of home and assessment centres been agreed within the exams officers group?			
Have you either reviewed your consortium's existing exam policy or agreed how you can contribute to drafting a policy if one is not already in place?			
Have you completed your <i>Consortium centre planner</i> ?			

CAPTURING LEARNER COHORT INFORMATION – ARE YOU READY?	Yes	Under way	No
Have you received details of which learners have registered for each line of learning and for each level of Diploma?			
Have you received cohort details for every constituent qualification?			
Is there a process in place to ensure learner cohort information is kept up to date?			

CAPTURING QUALIFICATION DETAILS – ARE YOU READY?	Yes	Under way	No
Have you received an assessment plan showing the method and timing of assessments in detail for each line of learning and Diploma level?			
Has a communications channel been established between line of learning leaders or domain assessors and the exams officers group to relay any changes to the assessment plan?			

ACTION – ARE YOU READY?	Yes	Under way	No
Has your centre registered with the <i>Diploma aggregation service</i> and the <i>Learner registration service</i> and nominated users for both systems?			
Have you attended QCA training on use of the <i>Diploma aggregation service</i> and the <i>Learner registration service</i> ?			
Have you received learner cohort details for all lines of learning and levels of Diploma?			
Have you received assessment plan information?			
Have you completed your <i>Consortium centre planner</i> ?			

About this publication

Who is it for?

Exams officers and exams office staff involved in managing Diploma assessment administration from September 2009.

Centre management with responsibility for effective management of assessment administration for the Diploma.

What is it about?

The Diploma qualification and what exams officers will need to do to prepare for managing its assessment administration.

What is it for?

The aim of the guide is to identify information that exams officers will need to find, and centre responsibilities that must be agreed, in order to prepare as a consortium group managing the administration of Diploma assessments.

Getting ready for the Diploma
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